OSPREY MILITARY

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES 281

US DRAGOONS 1833-55

355.14 OSP - 281

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1855323893

Det Kongelige Garnisonsbibliotek

000000386898

First published in Great Britain in 1995 by
Osprey, an imprint of Reed Consumer Books Ltd.
Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road,
London SW3 6RB
and Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore and
Toronto

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ISBN 1 85532 3893

Filmset in Great Britain by Keyspools Ltd
Printed through Bookbuilders Ltd, Hong Kong

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THE WEST BECKONS

By the late 1820s, furs, land and minerals made the Indian territories west of the Mississippi River an increasingly inviting realm. In response to these pressures for expansion, the United States government attempted to move the Native Americans out of the path of empire. Federal officials saw to it that some groups were relocated by negotiated treaties or by the use of force. To insure compliance, a military force was necessary. Not only would a frontier military establishment keep the Indians in check but, just as importantly, they were to protect the Indian's treaty-reserved areas from white encroachment.

Conventional infantrymen had served in a similar capacity in the garrisons elsewhere. But the vast expanse of the Great Plains, coupled with the fact that many tribal groups of the region possessed horses, meant a more mobile type of soldier was required. Consequently, on 15 June 1832, Congress authorised the raising of 600 mounted Rangers.

These hardy horsemen cut a colourful figure. Washington Irving, destined to become a noted American novelist, turned from fiction to describe these men. The Rangers adopted the hunting dress of the day, he noted. They 'were a heterogeneous crew; some in frock coats made of green blankets; others in leather hunting shirts, but the most part in marvelously ill-cut garments much the worse for wear, and evidently put on for rugged service'. In general, Irving thought: 'They looked not unlike bandits, returning from their plunder.'

What the Rangers lacked in spit and polish, they made up for by their horsemanship. The army realised that the experiment proved the worth of mounted troopers. All that seemed missing was traditional discipline. So the Rangers gave way to a more permanent organisation.

Henry Dodge headed the Battalion of Mounted Rangers before becoming the Colonel of the Regiment of Dragoons in 1833. A frontiersman, it appears that he preferred buckskins to the regulation uniform of his regiment. Watercolour on paper by George Catlin, 1834. (Missouri Historical Society)

The Dragoons are Authorised

On 2 March 1833, legislation provided for establishment of the United States Regiment of Dragoons. From the outset, an elitist air prevailed among these horse soldiers. One of the new troopers wrote:

> 'Many were enlisted under the express declaration that they were to rank with the cadets at the Military Academy, and that they should not be subject to the more severe restrictions of Army discipline. Many were told, when they were entreated to enlist, that they would have nothing to do but ride on horseback over the country, to explore the Western prairies and forests, occupations . . .'

Others believed they were 'to explore far and wide the Western territory, and bear the arms of the Union into the country of many Indian tribes . . . it was a prospect that did not fail to excite the enterprising and roving disposition of many fine men whose imaginations were inflamed . . . with the thoughts of scouring the far prairies on fine horses, amid buffalo and strange Indians'.

With prospects like these, recruiting officers expected to handpick their men. Captain Edwin V. Sumner certainly seemed successful in signing up his share of adventurous individuals. A newspaper described them as 'the finest looking raw recruits we ever saw; all New Yorkers, selected by Captain Sumner himself from the northern and western counties of the state within the age of 25 years, and as nearly as possible, 5 feet 8 inches in height, all possessing a good English education and men of strictly correct habits'.

While this report seems to be too good to be true, officers did attempt to follow the directive to enlist native-born men between twenty-five and thirty-five, 'whose size, figure, and early pursuits may best qualify them for mounted soldiers'. Moreover, the

James Clyman, a former mountain man, also served as an officer with the Mounted Rangers before accepting a commission as a second lieutenant of Dragoons, a position he held from 1833 through 1835. His surviving dress uniform is the oldest known example from the Regiment of Dragoons, and includes the cap with cap lines, coatee, trousers and sash. Also seen are the sabre belt and officer's 1833-pattern sabre with gold lace knot. (California State Parks and Recreation)

rank and file 'were to be sought from all parts of the country so that there would be no sectional tone'.

Nevertheless, politics of the period played a key part in the formation of the Dragoons. The appointment of officers for the regiment provided Congressmen with a certain amount of patronage. But more consideration seems to have been given to mixing regular Army officers and former Ranger officers. The Army officers were to teach the Rangers about military procedures and discipline, while the Rangers were to share their knowledge about the West and the Indians who peopled it.

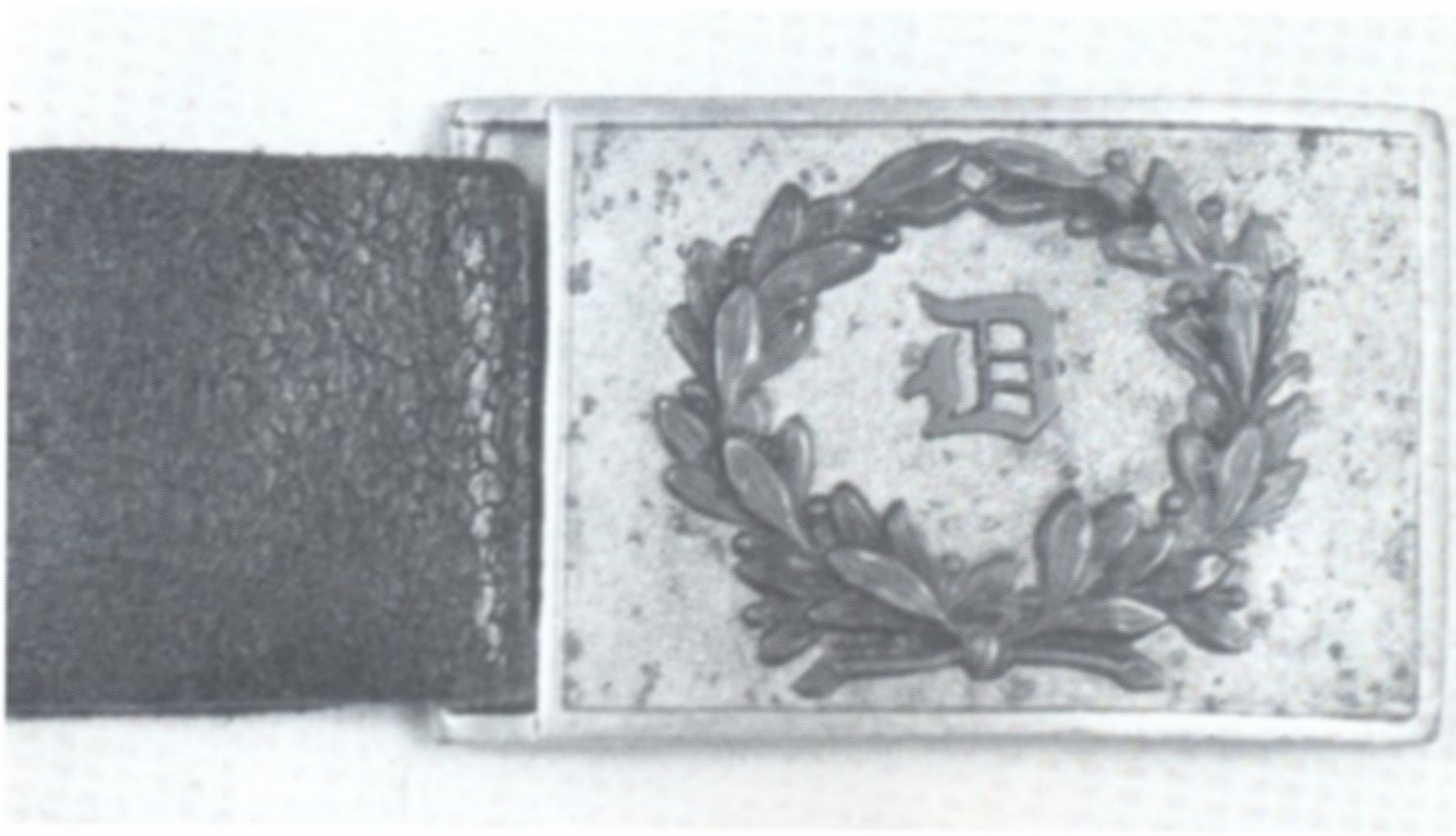
President Andrew Jackson personally selected the leader of this composite outfit. He chose fellow frontiersman and hero of the Western press, Colonel Henry Dodge. A veteran of the Blackhawk War, Dodge had headed the Rangers until it was disbanded. His new second-in-command, Stephen Watts Kearny, was a career infantry officer who assumed responsibility for recruiting and organising the regiment.

Kearny was a thoroughgoing professional. He aimed to fill the ranks rapidly, then give his men a lengthy period of intensive training at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, the original headquarters of the unit. The War Department had instructed Kearny to mould his men into a formidable fighting force of tightly disciplined troopers. Turning this dream into a reality proved another matter. Many of the men were not familiar with even the basics of horsemanship.

Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke, one of the regiment's young officers, said that officers had to produce 'order out of chaos'. He contended that the task ahead far exceeded the concerns of the average infantry officer since, 'with cavalry . . . the amount of duty, instruction, and responsibility, may safely be considered doubled in comparison of the extraordinary fact, that cavalry tactics were unknown in the army; and with that, whole theory and practical detail were to be studiously acquired – in a manner invented – by officers before they could teach others'. Even basic foot drill taxed the infantry officers' patience because few of the men boasted prior military service. Private James Hildreth wrote: 'Sergeant Roberts . . . was the only one in the troop that knew how to put his left foot foremost and to attempt to describe the ludicrous piece of work we made of it would be entirely out of the question.'

The men soon grew tired of the parade field. After all, they joined on the promise of adventure. Instead of enjoying the privileges and comforts promised them, they found they had taken on the onerous tasks of the foot soldier. And they had extra responsibilities, 'that peculiarly belong to the Dragoon'. They performed drill, fatigues, guard and military functions, in addition to building their own quarters and stables, and raising some of their own food. All this came after a trooper tended his mount and tack, bothersome duties which did not plague the infantrymen. Far from being exempt, the Dragoon endured the same tiring routine as the frontier 'doughboy' and more.

Private Hildreth thought that the Dragoons



Close-up of the 1833–51-pattern Dragoon officer's belt plate with script 'D' and wreath, both in silver. (State Historical Society of Wisconsin)

might still have endured their lot if their officers treated them more decently. Unfortunately, according to Hildreth, some of the 'brass' were ill-educated, brutal and alcoholic individuals. Commissioning such men caused a few of the rank and file to believe the government broke its side of the enlistment contract. The result was desertion, a problem which constantly gnawed at the US Army for the rest of the 19th century.

Many of the top-ranking officers were, in fact, the best leadership then available. But some of these men saw their assignment as a means of furthering personal ambitions. Consequently, Dodge – a man described by one of his subordinates as 'thick set, somewhat grey, a thorough backwoodsman, very fond of talking of his own exploits' – found some problem in holding together his command. Neither tactful nor unassuming, the colonel actually increased friction among his officers. Impervious to his own role in causing dissension, he blamed others for the unrest. In his diary, he noted: 'I find more treachery and deception practiced in the Army than I ever expected to find with a Body of Men who Call themselves Gentlemen. My situation is unpleasant. [Jefferson] Davis who I appointed as my adjutant was among the first to take a stand against me. Major

Stephen Watts Kearny was the lieutenant colonel of the Regiment of Dragoons and became its commanding colonel in 1835 with Dodge's departure. This early portrait depicts him in the Dragoon dress uniform prescribed for field grade officers from 1833 to 1851. (Library of Congress)

[Richard] Mason and Davis are now two of my most inveterate enemies.'

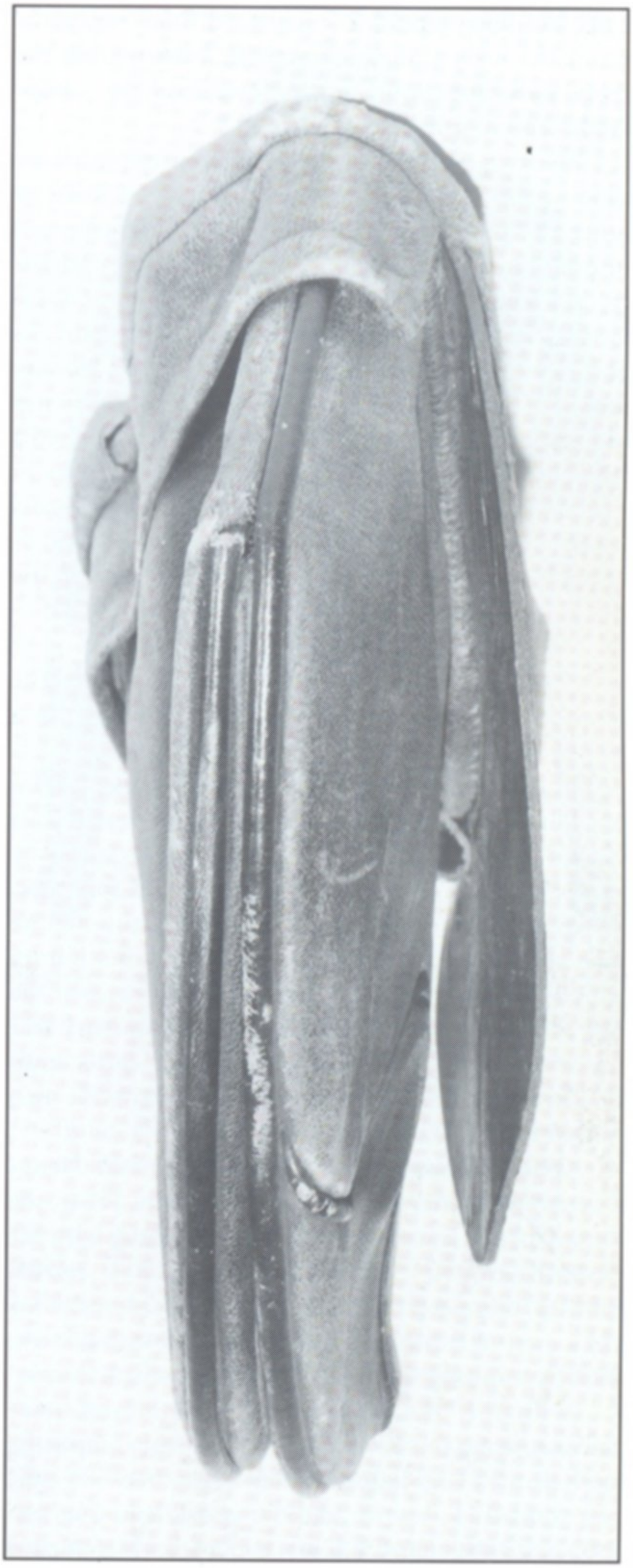
However, the regiment soon faced challenges that required the full co-operation of every member. Orders arrived from the War Department sending Dodge's ill-prepared and under-strength command of five companies to Fort Gibson, near present-day Tulsa, Oklahoma. Lieutenant Cooke noted: 'At the appearance of winter – in November – before any clothing or the proper arms had been received; before two companies received their horses; just at that season when all civilized, and, I believe, barbarous nations, even in the state of war, suspend hostilities and go into winter quarters, these five companies received an order to march out of theirs – to take to the field!' But he understood why: 'The corps, having been raised for the defense of the frontier, would be disbanded if it remained inactive so far in the interior at Jefferson Barracks.'

THE CAMPAIGNS 1833–40

The First Foray, 1833–34

On 20 November 1833, the regiment rode out towards Fort Gibson. They arrived in mid-December, but their warm welcome soon gave way to the problems of setting up camp. February brought bitter weather which destroyed the local forage. The horses suffered terribly. New mounts had to be procured, along with fodder, from the Arkansas Territory. Next, a steamboat carrying their clothing ran aground. The lack of ammunition made target practice problematic. Dodge felt it 'a matter of the first importance to Make Men . . . Good marksmen, [therefore,] on relieving the Guards I have directed the Men to fire at a target fifty paces [away].' Much to his chagrin, the colonel found 'the greater part of them Knows Nothing about the use of Arms'.

Living conditions were poor. The men were housed in large barracks of oak shingles which 'afforded poor protection from the cold . . . the roofs were leaky, but buffalo robes kept the water from the saddles, knapsacks, and clothing, assuring to preserve



The black leather forage cap issued for field service to the Dragoons in 1833 could be folded when not in use. (Smithsonian Institution)

a dry sleeping place for the night. At times rain came down the wide chimneys, perhaps besprinkling the rusty pork and flour, or dripping into the camp-kettles and diluting the bean soup.'

As often proved the case in a frontier garrison, time weighed heavy. When not performing drills or other chores, the troops entertained themselves with impromptu dances. They were joined by the infantrymen from Fort Gibson and members of the Osage, Creek, and Seminole tribes who camped around the post. One of the sergeants, a towering six feet six inches of horse soldier, usually served as the master of ceremonies. The government had not authorised a band for the Dragoons, unlike their counterparts in the other combat arms, but some of the Tennesseans brought out fiddles and, occasionally, even a banjo or clarinet accompanied them. Sometimes one of the buglers added his talents.

At other times, the men might just listen to music or sing some of their favourites, such as 'The Hunters of Kentucky' or 'O Tis my Delight in a Storm Season of the Year'. Observing various aspects of the local Indian life, such as horse-races, dances, wrestling, foot-races, and ball-games, passed idle time. The young artist, George Catlin, who spent the winter with the Dragoons, became an avid spectator. When a tallow candle could be spared, the literate men could take advantage of the regimental library which contained such titles as *Robinson Crusoe* or the *Life of General Marion*, the famed Revolutionary War cavalry leader. Others probably played cards until nine in the evening when tattoo sounded and the men retired for the night.

With the approach of spring, General Henry Leavenworth arrived and, on 30 April 1834, the Regiment of United States Dragoons, along with the Seventh United States Infantry, held a review. Shortly thereafter, Captain Clifton Wharton took sixty men to escort a group of traders to Santa Fe, thereby relieving the infantrymen their former task.

With the loss of Wharton's contingent, reinforcements, in the form of five additional companies, started out from Jefferson Barracks. The 453-mile trip went smoothly for the horse soldiers. One enlisted man of Company I kept a journal which logged their daily progress. At Springfield, Missouri, he described the inhabitants as 'idle and lazy depending upon their negroes for support which is the custom

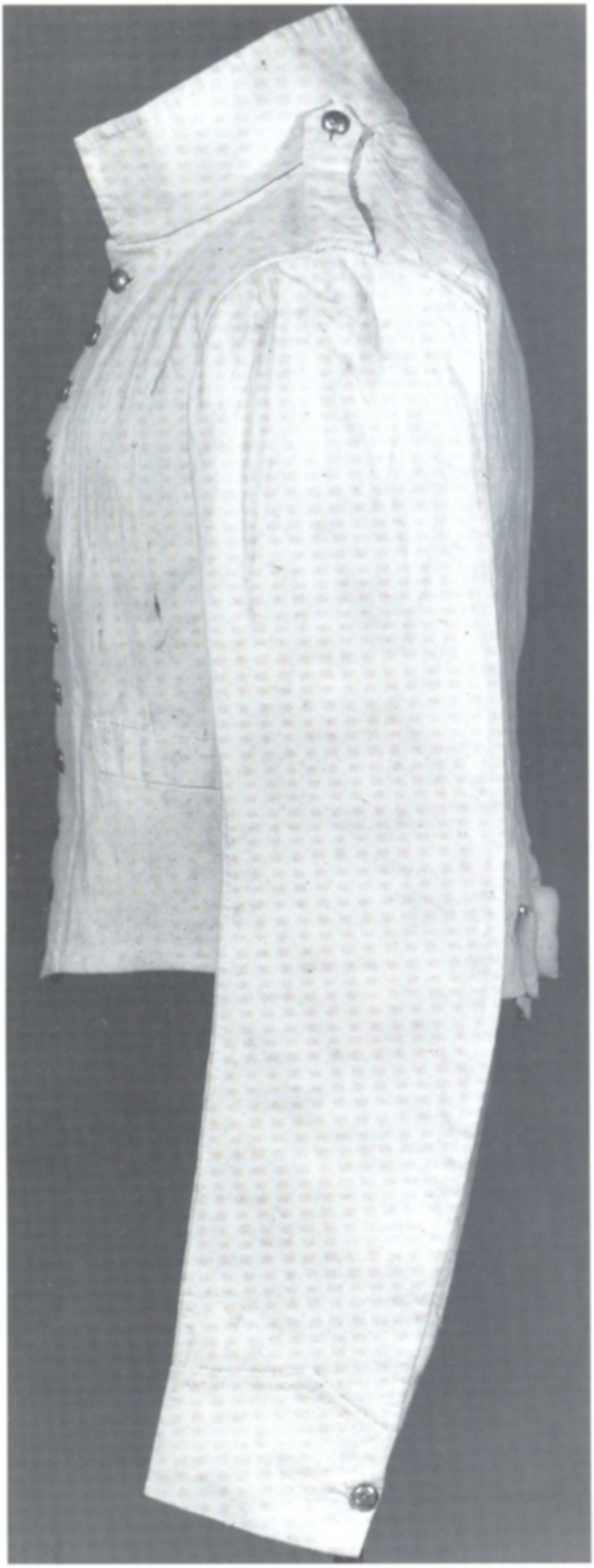
Regulations for Dragoon enlisted men called for a dark blue wool 'round-about' jacket trimmed in medium yellow worsted tape for field and campaign duty from 1833 to 1851 as seen in this front, side, and rear view. (Smithsonian Institution)

in all slave states . . . all men in the country sell Whiskey and other things to us soldiers at a most exorbitant price – for instance, 25 cents a pint for Whiskey, 12½ cents a quart for milk'.

Soon the troops would not have to worry about their dealings with other whites. Far from the settlements, preparations for a summer campaign began. The camp came alive. One man described the atmosphere: 'Throughout the day, a constant scene of bustle and noise, the blacksmith shops are kept in continual operation, tailors and saddlers find constant employment, and in fact no one has time to idle . . . standing during the whole of the day exposed to the heat of the broiling sun, which during the week has raised from 103 to 107 in the thermometer.'

Despite the heat, everything seemed ready. On 10 June 1834, General Leavenworth reviewed the assembled companies. They began what was to become the common practice of mounted forces in the United States; they rode mounts of 'one color entirely'. The artist Catlin wrote: 'There is a company of bays, a company of blacks, one of whites, one of sorrels, one of greys, one of cream color . . . . This regiment goes out under the command of Colonel Dodge, and from his well-tested qualifications and from the beautiful equipment at his command, there can be little doubt that they will do credit to themselves and an honor to their country, so far as honors can be gained and laurels can be plucked from their wild stems in a savage country.'

Leavenworth decided to accompany the troops on the first leg of their trek. He and approximately



five hundred men rode west to impress the Pawnees and Comanche with the power of the United States. By so doing, officials believed these Native Americans would make treaties which would insure peace on the frontier. But July's heat caused serious illness in some forty-five men and three officers. Soon, more joined them on the sick list. Some 180 miles out from Fort Gibson, the situation deteriorated to the extent that a base camp was established where 109 of the command remained behind to look after 86 of their comrades who had fallen victim to the heat and a 'distressing bilious fever'. The horses also suffered. Many died. So did some of the men, including General Leavenworth. Other losses came through desertion. Dodge summarised the whole expedition in a letter. He contended: 'Perhaps there never has been in America a campaign that operated More Severely on Man and Horses. The excessive Heat of the Sun exceeded anything I ever experienced. I marched from Fort Gibson with 500 Men and When I reached the Pawnee Pict Village I had not more than 190 Men fit for duty.'

After this disastrous foray, the survivors returned to Fort Gibson, in late August. Nonetheless, they accomplished their task of showing the flag. The powerful Plains Indians they met had promised peace, at least for the moment. So their first effort could be deemed a success. The newspapers of the day thought otherwise though. The *Missouri Republican* maintained: 'After a full and fair trial of a year – after the expenditure of an immense sum of money – after the loss of an hundred men, and some of the most promising officers in the service – it must be evident, that this regiment . . . ought to be disbanded or merged into the equally effective ranks of the infantry.' The *New York Evening Star* echoed these sentiments with the conclusion: 'Considering the little that could have been anticipated, and less that has been achieved, the expense of so many valuable lives and so large an amount of property, has been but of small avail.'

The truth was, the first expedition achieved only limited objectives, but several important lessons had

White linen trousers and the white linen round-about shown here were also included for the hot summer months as a campaign uniform, in the 1830s to the early 1850s. (Smithsonian Institution)

been learned. For example, the Dragoons' big, farm-fed horses needed corn to survive, while Catlin's mustangs and the army mules, which traced their ancestry back to the Santa Fe Trail, grew fat on the Plains' grasses. The unit also found that its cumbersome supply wagons slowed progress. Learning from these mistakes, the regiment managed to survive its detractors. Congress did not cut appropriations for the troopers and, in 1835, three squadrons took up station on the frontier.

New Stations and Missions, 1835

Colonel Dodge established his headquarters with four companies along the Missouri River at Fort Leavenworth, while Kearny, with three companies, reported at Fort Des Moines, a new installation on the west bank of the Mississippi River near the mouth of the Des Moines River in Iowa. Major Mason led the remaining three companies from Fort Gibson and rode about eighty miles up the Arkansas River to begin construction of yet another new cantonment, Fort Jones.

Dodge soon found that he could hold only partial control over his command. Dodge's and Kearny's forces were in one military district, while Mason's contingent fell into the jurisdiction of another department. After a miserable winter in poorly constructed huts, Mason's men received orders to head for Comanche and Kiowa country to strengthen the friendly relations with these tribes that had been established on the first expedition. On 1 June, Major Mason set up Camp Holmes on the fringe of Comanche country as a treaty site. Towards the end of August 1835, there was a week-long conference between three treaty commissioners and delegations from the Wichita and Comanche nations. The talks bore fruit and the government agents succeeded in making one of the few agreements with these two bands in the pre-Civil War era. Although they failed to make up similar agreements with the Kiowas, the

On formal occasions the dress uniform for the rank and file resembled that of their officers, although the tape which ornamented the coatee was yellow worsted rather than gold lace, among other differences which set off enlisted men from their commissioned officers. This example is that of a Dragoon sergeant who wears the new 1839-pattern white buff sabre belt. (Smithsonian Institution)

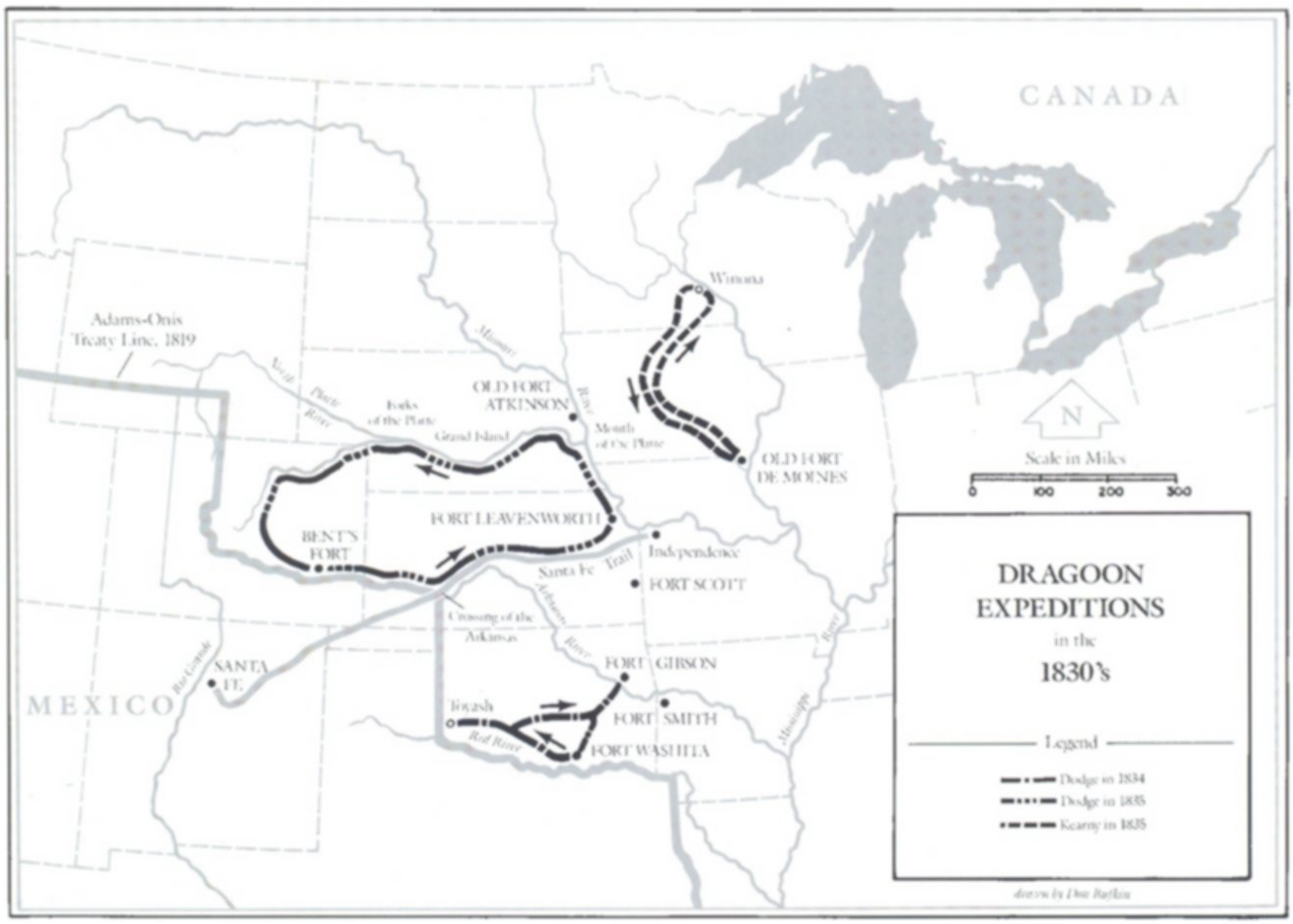
dangerous southwestern Plains tribes remained relatively peaceful for the rest of the year.

To the north, Kearny's troops also carried out a peacekeeping mission. On 7 June 1835, he led one hundred and fifty dragoons on a good-will expedition to the Sioux. Soggy ground slowed the column but, on 7 July, Kearny's blue-clad cavaliers reached the Wabash's Sioux village on the Mississippi River near present-day Winona, Minnesota. Several days later, tribesmen appeared and began discussions. They eventually agreed to restrain their warriors from raiding the neighbouring Sac-Fox country, an impressive promise since these were their hereditary enemies. With this accomplished, Kearny broke camp and set out again. As fate would have it, he intercepted a party of Sioux returning from a foray into Sac-Fox country. Holding a conference at once, he secured a promise from the fifteen braves that they would refrain from making such raids again.

Then Kearny rode south. After searching for a location to found a new military post at the mouth of the Racoon Fork of the Des Moines, he proceeded to the Sac-Fox settlements west of his own garrison. There, he attempted to impress them with the advantages of peace with the Sioux. After his council, Kearny wrote the Adjutant General of the Army that he could over-awe the tribes from the Missouri north to the Minnesota with only one hundred and fifty dragoons. Fortunately, he never had to test his boast. But this claim would be repeated later in the century with disastrous results.

While Kearny conducted business with Sioux and the Sac-Fox, Colonel Dodge tackled a longer and more hazardous march with his three companies of one hundred and twenty troopers, baggage wagons and a pair of three-pounder swivel guns. His orders directed him to visit the tribes of the Upper Platte River, then circle back through the Arkansas River

Map of major Dragoon expeditions and forays of the 1830s.



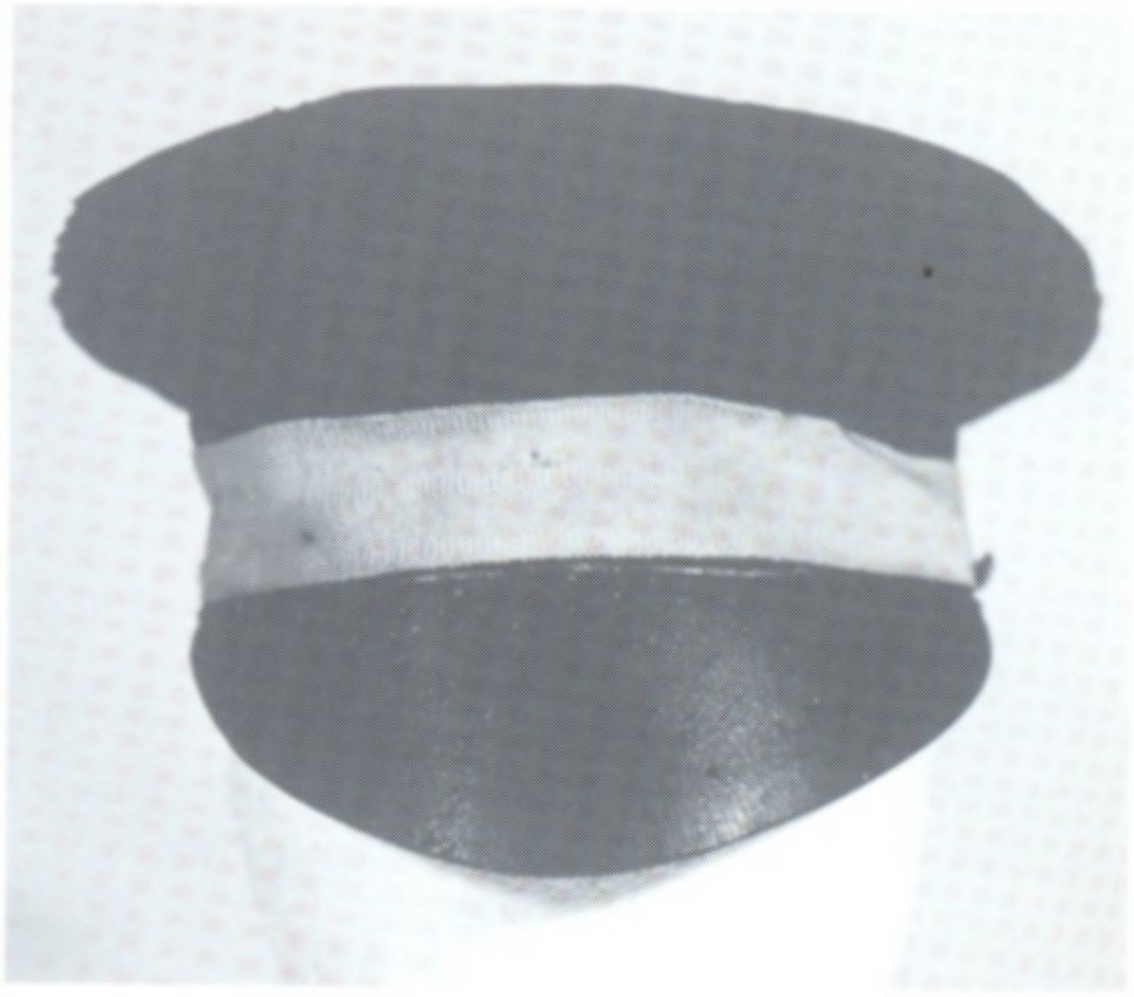
Valley. A train of pack animals carried sixty days' rations, while extra flour was loaded into two ox-drawn wagons. By 10 June, the Dragoons halted near the mouth of the Platte River for a meeting with the Otos. Seven days later, Dodge held discussions with the Omahas at the same location.

From there, he continued up the Platte. On 23 June, Dodge met the Pawnees at Grand Island, Nebraska. Some two weeks later, at a spot some twenty miles upstream from the forks of the Platte, the soldiers treated with the Arickara. Pushing forward, the force came in sight of the Rockies before cutting south and starting toward the Arkansas. Between 6 and 10 August, the Dragoons rested at Bent's Fort, while Dodge heard from the Osages who sent a promise to keep peace with their enemies, the Cheyennes and the Arapahoes. From Bent's Fort, the men faced east and returned home to Fort Leavenworth across Kansas.

By their summer campaigns of 1835, Colonel Dodge and his subordinates demonstrated that the expedition of the previous year did not display the real potential of these horse soldiers. They had shown that they could make successful incursions into distant Indian territory and made valuable maps of the routes they took. Indeed, Dodge's 1,600-mile expedition cost the life of only one man, a soldier who died of 'inflammation of the bowels'. This record stood in sharp contrast to that of the previous year.

There had also been no clash with the tribes. The Indians seemed impressed that the US Army could find them in their vast homelands. The idea that a mobile, well-equipped foe could strike them even on the limitless prairies made a powerful impression. For the time being at least, it seemed expedient for both sides to keep the peace.

Despite these achievements, the outcry over the costs of the Dragoon expeditions once again rang out among settlers, taxpayers and in the halls of Congress. *The Saint Louis Missouri Republican* continued to criticise the expeditions. The paper lambasted the Indian removal policy then in force on the grounds that relocating eastern tribes just west of the Missouri settlements created a possible smouldering powder keg which could ignite into a bloody Indian war. Even Lieutenant-Colonel Kearny came to share these sentiments.



In 1839, a new forage cap of dark blue wool with a leather visor was adopted. By the 1840s, the Second Dragoons unofficially added a band of yellow worsted tape around the body below the crown as seen in this example. (Museum Collections Minnesota Historical Society, photographer Stephen Osman)

Similarly, Colonel Dodge and several other high-ranking military officials supported the idea that a continuous line of small forts would provide the best type of protection for the frontier settlements, at a reduced cost. Local politicians, aware of the economic benefits for their constituents living near the proposed installations, pushed for Congressional approval. By 31 January 1836, a static frontier defence policy went into effect. This restricted the movements of the Dragoons in the West for the next half dozen years. But it proved to be a false economy which would be paid for later in lives.

The Second Dragoons

That same year, the government created a second regiment of dragoons. This was immediately sent off to the Everglades, an unlikely terrain for the deployment of mounted troops. In fact, the new unit ended up being dismounted as they fought a bloody anti-guerrilla action in the swamps of Florida.

For the next seven years, the Second Dragoons spent most of their time in this semi-tropical environment, so ill-suited to their deployment. They harassed and pursued tiny bands of Seminoles – as small as a family group or an individual enemy –

Nathan Boone, son of the famous frontiersman Daniel Boone, was a captain with the First Dragoons. He has donned the single-breasted frock coat authorised for company grade officers in the 1830s, and the distinctive Dragoon's shoulder straps prescribed for the Dragoon regiments in 1839. (State Historical Society of Missouri)

never really coming to grips with their foes. One of the officers summed up the situation: 'The peculiar service devolving upon the officer in the *scouts* through the country was quite as debilitating as the effects of the climate upon the constitution. His duties were divested of all attributes of a soldier . . . . His command of 30 or 40 men resembled more a vandatti than a body of soldiers, in the service of their country.'

Nevertheless, the Second Dragoons attained a reputation for their 'dash' – but at the cost of the lives of seven officers and some 212 enlisted men, most of whom succumbed to disease rather than killed in encounters with the elusive Seminoles and their black allies – runaway slaves.

One notable exception occurred in July of 1839,• when the regiment's second in command, Lieutenant-Colonel William S. Harney, barely escaped with his life after a night attack upon a trading post where he and nineteen of his troops encamped. According to a black interpreter, who accompanied the party, at the break of day on 23 July 'I heard the yell of Indians and the discharge of rifles; and as I ran out I found they were all around us'. One of the white traders received a wound, 'but continued to talk some minutes, when an Indian, placing a rifle close to him, fired. Still he talked, when the Indian beat his brains out with the butt of his rifle. As I ran for the river several rifles were discharged at me; a ball struck my leg, which threw me down, when the Indians brought me back to the store.'

The Seminoles displayed compassion for the former slave who had lived among them at one time. The remaining captives did not fare as well. A captured Dragoon sergeant, a white civilian carpenter, and another black 'were put to death in a most cruel manner'. After holding their prisoners for four days, the Seminoles 'tied them to a pine-tree, and inserted in their flesh slivers of light wood, setting them on fire, and at the same time placing torches at their feet. In this way it was five or six hours before they died.'

Another eleven Dragoons had fallen during the original battle; two more sustained wounds. Harney and the remaining men escaped and returned with a small party of Dragoons and artillerymen in December of 1840 to take vengeance. According to an early history of the incident, Harney's force 'committed dreadful havoc' on the enemy 'so that his name became a terror to them far and wide'. From 7 to 10 December, Harney's detachment pursued the Seminoles from one island to another in an early search-and-destroy mission. They captured many women and children and hung several of the men presumed responsible for the attack on the trading post.

While their brothers-in-arms waged war against the Seminoles, the First Dragoons – as the regiment was known after 1836 – continued its routine patrols of the frontier, although on a much reduced scale.

Captain Thomas Swords appeared in his 1833-pattern coatee for this painting, complete with gold shoulder cords which were prescribed for field grade officers and members of the regimental staff. (West Point Museum)

Other changes took place in the mid-1830s. Henry Dodge resigned to accept an appointment as the territorial governor of Wisconsin. Kearny took over and immediately set about the knotty task of shaking down the regiment after a fairly easy-going period under Dodge.

Early in the unit's history, Kearny had noted that no manual existed for the use of the Dragoon's breechloading Hall carbine. He wrote to Dodge requesting that something be done. Nothing happened. In Kearny's estimation Dodge '*never did, nor could* drill a company or squadron of cavalry' and displayed little interest in such matters. With only one copy of the latest French mounted manual available in the regiment, Kearny now appointed Captain Sumner as president of a board to come up with a standard system for the carbine.

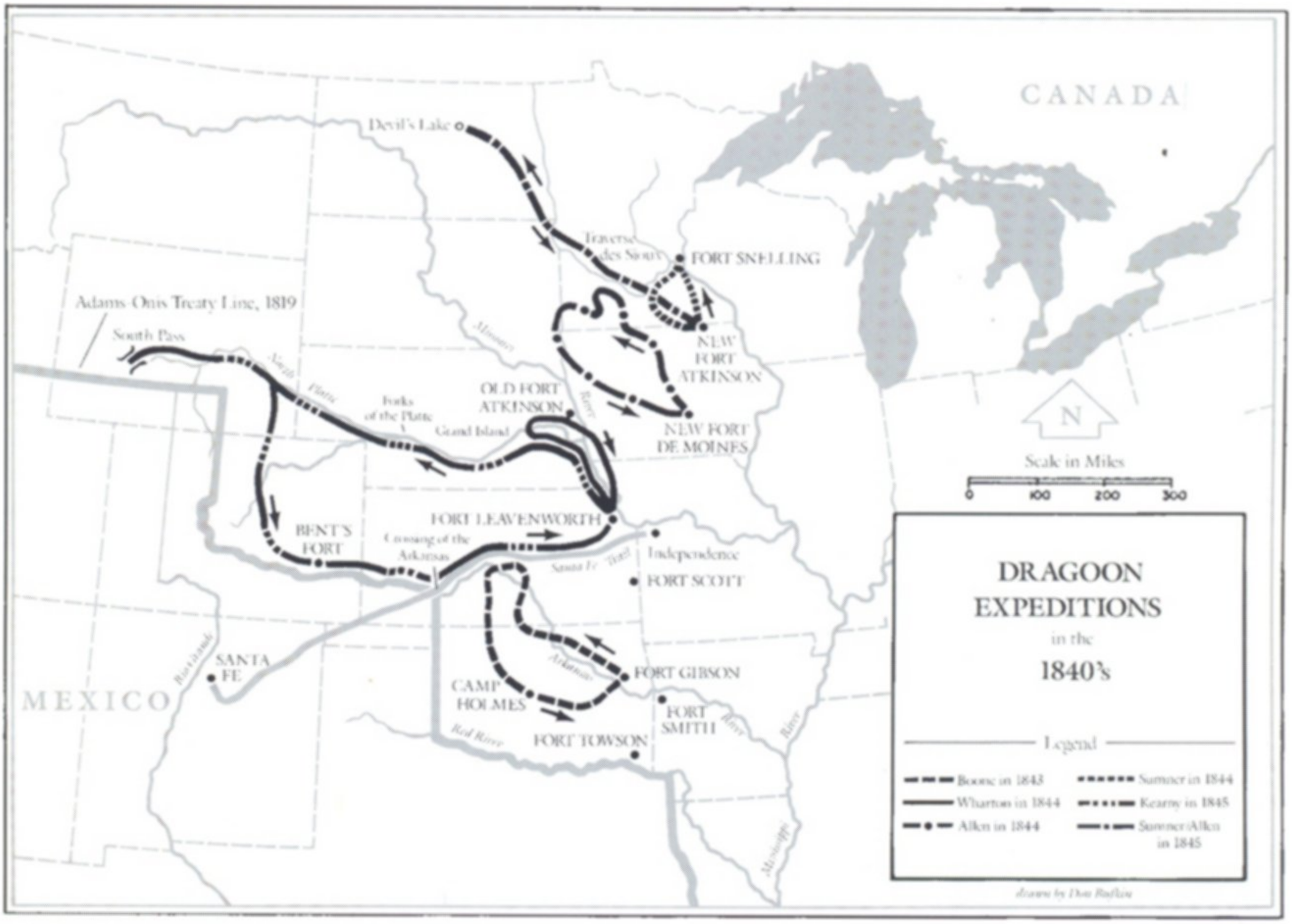
Kearny also ultimately got approval for three other officers to visit France as observers at the Royal Cavalry School in Saumur to study French cavalry tactics. One of these young subalterns was Kearny's nephew, Philip. The younger Kearny joined the military over his father's objection. When his grandfather died, he left him more than a million dollars. If Philip Kearny saw 'a well turned-out soldier with clean equipment and uniform' he would, according to Private Tom Elderkin of Kearny's company, 'praise the man and give him a few bucks as a reward'. Elderkin also noted that any time new types of saddles or equipment became available Kearny would buy it 'out of his own pocket for us'. Little wonder then that the rank and file thought he was 'a hunky-dory shoulder strap', the barracks' slang for a popular officer.

With his usual enthusiasm, Philip Kearny reported to France accompanied by fellow junior officers, Henry Turner and William Eustis. Arriving after a voyage from New York on 1 October 1839, the trio found the American ambassador and former secretary of war, Lewis Cass, took an interest in their duties. They even managed to dine with the king before reporting to the French cavalry school. When they completed their study, Turner and Eustis returned home. But Kearny sailed to Africa where he participated in a foray with the French before heading back to the United States.

THE CAMPAIGNS 1841–55

Events of the Early 1840s

Kearny was reunited with Turner and Eustis at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, the newly established Dragoon school. There, the men employed their training from Saumur, along with Kearny's experiences in North Africa, to complete the first manual for the American horse soldier. By 1841, their Colonel declared that, beginning on 23 March, the system, which finally had been approved by the Army, would be followed to the letter. Colonel Kearny made it clear 'neither order of augmentation . . . nor detail of execution' would be tolerated and that the commanders would not depart from this 'bible' to even 'the slightest degree'.



Map of major Dragoon expeditions and forays of the 1840s, prior to the War with Mexico.

Left: Second Lieutenant Bezaleel Wells Armstrong received his commission with the First Dragoons on graduation from the United States Military Academy in 1845, but transferred to the Second Dragoons the following year. He remained with that regiment until his death on 17 February 1849.

Armstrong wears the 1839 forage cap with a gold embroidered six-point star on the cap (the type prescribed for the rear of the coatee) and the 1833-pattern coatee with second lieutenant's epaulettes. The gloves are non-regulation and partially cover the cuffs of the coatee. (Herb Peck, Jr.)

The Second Dragoons finally transferred from Florida to stations in Louisiana and Arkansas in 1842, and also began a 'strenuous schedule of training' under Captain William J. Hardee. This future Confederate lieutenant – general had just returned from a tour of Europe himself, where he too had studied European tactics. Now, as the regiment's executive officer, he oversaw the tactical exercises and mounted drill of the unit. He even managed to arm the four companies located at Fort Jesup, Louisiana, with lances. The remainder of the companies continued to practise with the sabre, single-shot pistol, and carbine.

Just as Hardee began to make progress in his training efforts, Congress began a retrenchment typical of all post-war periods. With the end of major hostilities against the Seminoles, reductions were ordered by Washington. But actually, the debate about the Second Dragoons could be traced back nearly six years. Then the followers of Andrew Jackson had used the legislation which proposed the outfit's creation as a springboard to attack the US Military Academy. These politicians wanted to do away with West Point, claiming its graduates did not learn to fight Indians there – a major reason for the existence of the army in the minds of many a frontiersman. When their move to close the Academy failed, the representative from Kentucky proposed that two-thirds of the new regiment's officers be

taken from civilian applicants or from the ranks. When this proposal was also defeated, in 1842, the House of Representatives called for the elimination of the Second Dragoons altogether. Eventually a compromise was found. The Senate proposed that the Second Dragoons be converted to a rifle regiment. By taking away the horses and substituting rifles for carbines, the size of the army would remain the same but costs would be lower as the treasury would no longer have to pay for the mounts.

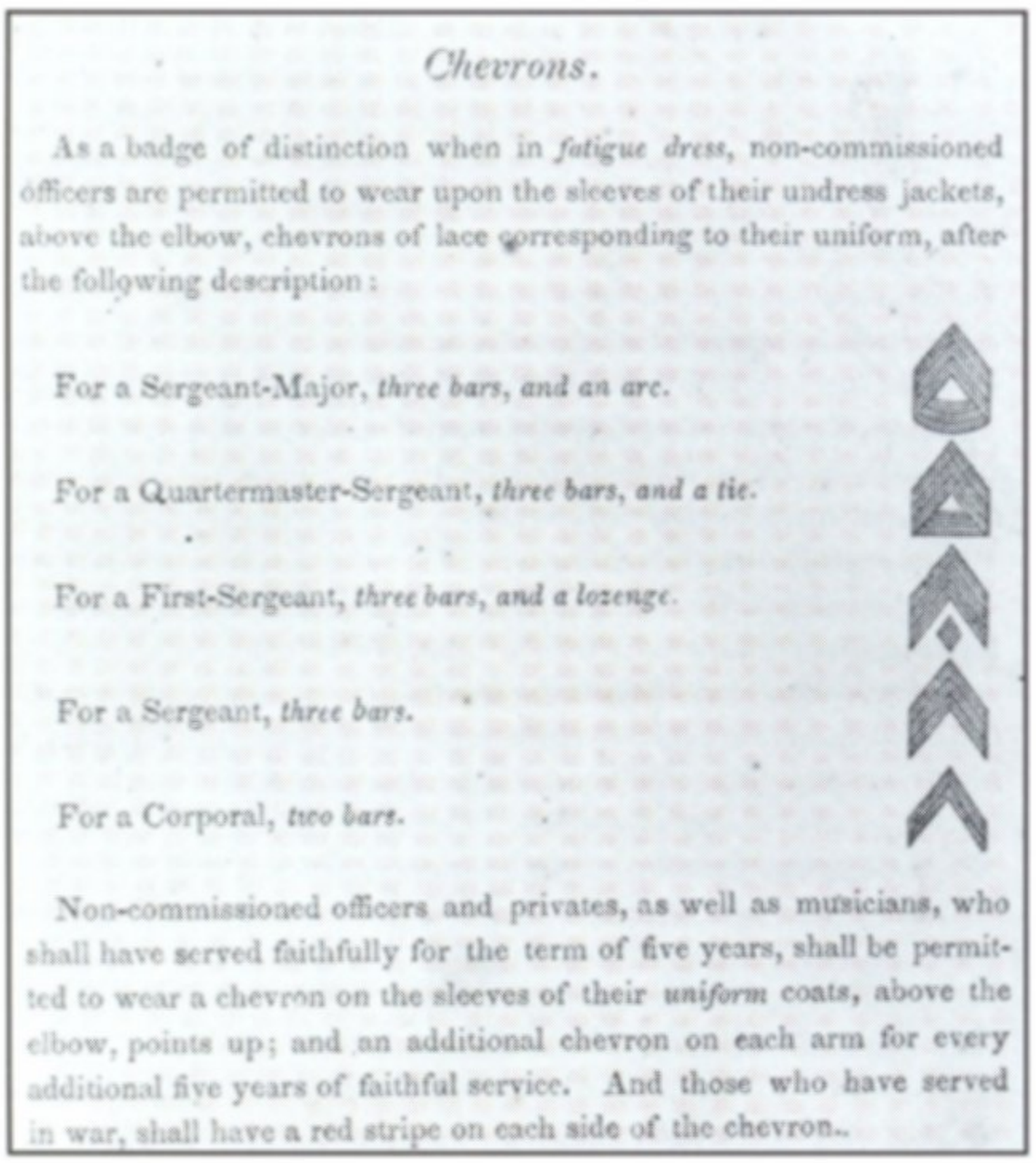
General Order Number 22 of 13 March 1843 required the Second Dragoons to turn over its horses to the First Dragoons, or to dispose of them in other ways. Morale sank, then the secretary for war stepped in. In his report, he noted that an insignificant sum was saved by dismounting the regiment. He also called attention to the extended frontier which was too vast for the First Dragoons to police alone. Therefore, he recommended, the regiment of riflemen should be remounted. Petitions from Missouri and Louisiana state legislatures supported this proposal, and Congress retracted its earlier decision.

This move also came in part as a response to growing US national interests in the Pacific Northwest where Britain and the United States vied for control of the fur-rich region with its timber resources and farm lands. The then undefined border between Canada and the US particularly had led to friction between London and Washington. But, peaceful negotiations resolved the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States over the Oregon Country.

Meanwhile in March of 1843, when they heard that their beloved horses were to be returned, officers and men rejoiced – a gill of whisky went to each man. After a variety of amateur theatrical performances to celebrate the event, the officers of Fort Jesup decided to fire a salute to mark the occasion. They moved in a body to the parade ground where the retreat and reveille gun stood. With no horses available yet, two of the officers mounted the loaded piece to ride it when it was fired. A scuffle broke out to determine who would gain this honour and one of the gentlemen ended up on top of the vent hole. When the gun went off, he went up several feet in the air and came down with his uniform on fire. But his comrades rolled him in the grass and put out the flames before they could cause real harm. Following the lead of their superiors, one intoxicated ranker blurted out: 'Hereafter, we'll do ev-ev'ithin' mounted! We'll eat (hic), drink (hic), and sleep in the (hic) saddle; we'll live mounted and (hic) we'll d-die mounted.'

During the brief period that the Second was a rifle regiment, Kearny's men gained a number of mounts. So the First Dragoons were at full strength when Kearny carried out the directive to establish a temporary outpost at the mouth of the Racoon Fork of the Des Moines River, to keep the peace with the Sac-Fox in the few years remaining before their relocation across the Missouri. Not all the tribes living in Iowa of 1843 proved as easy to deal with, however. The Winnebagos crossed the Mississippi to their former Illinois and Wisconsin homeland to hunt. This drew Captain Sumner's command out from Fort Atkinson, Kansas, to track the foraging Indians and return them to their new reserve.

Further west, another Dragoon officer, Philip St. George Cooke (who during the Civil War was destined to fight opposite his future son-in-law,



Chevrons.

As a badge of distinction when in *fatigue dress*, non-commissioned officers are permitted to wear upon the sleeves of their undress jackets, above the elbow, chevrons of lace corresponding to their uniform, after the following description:

For a Sergeant-Major, *three bars, and an arc.*

For a Quartermaster-Sergeant, *three bars, and a tie.*

For a First-Sergeant, *three bars, and a lozenge.*

For a Sergeant, *three bars.*

For a Corporal, *two bars.*

Non-commissioned officers and privates, as well as musicians, who shall have served faithfully for the term of five years, shall be permitted to wear a chevron on the sleeves of their *uniform* coats, above the elbow, points up; and an additional chevron on each arm for every additional five years of faithful service. And those who have served in war, shall have a red stripe on each side of the chevron..

In 1847, first sergeants were given a distinctive chevron to indicate rank, a lozenge or diamond that appeared in the 'V' of the stripes. In that same year, chevrons for fatigue uniforms were changed to point up while those for dress coats were to continue with points down.

In 1847, colonels of the Dragoon regiments were authorised the wear of a chapeau in lieu of the dress cap. The chapeau and epaulettes exhibited here belonged to William S. Harney when he was the colonel of the Second Dragoons while the coatee is a field grade version (majors to colonels) which was worn by S. W. Kearny during the more than twelve years he served with the First Dragoons. (Missouri Historical Society)

J. E. B. Stuart) led two detachments to protect traders and travellers on the Santa Fe Trail. Some Texans had threatened to disrupt the route and confiscate the caravans of Mexican merchants. A band led by Jacob Snively attempted to make good this boast, but Cooke's contingent managed to disarm the would-be raiders. He sent some off to Texas and others towards Missouri. After seeing the traders safely across the Arkansas River at the Cimarron Crossing, he marched back to Fort Leavenworth. Fearing further outbreaks by the Texans along the road, Cooke took to the saddle in August to escort 140 wagons belonging to Mexican businessmen. Beyond the Arkansas River they met a Mexican patrol, which took them the remainder of the way to Santa Fe.

These amicable relations between the US and Mexico would not last long because the cry of Manifest Destiny soon brought the two countries to the brink of war. But before the conflict actually commenced, the Dragoons concluded some of their last

Richard Mason (in his 1833-pattern dress coatee) was the first major of the First Dragoons. He then rose to lieutenant colonel and, ultimately, colonel of the regiment, as well as serving as acting governor of California during the latter period of the Mexican War. (National Archives)

forays to the frontier, undertaken in part due to the growing push of pioneers to the Pacific Northwest.

Kearny led one of the last major expeditions of this type, leaving Fort Leavenworth on 18 May 1845 with five companies of his First Dragoons. When the expedition left, Philip St. George Cooke exclaimed: 'It was a beautiful sight! – the squadrons were gliding, two abreast, along gentle curves, over the fresh green grass which was brilliant in the slant rays of the sun.' The horses had a 'gallant bearing; – fifty blacks led; fifty grays followed; then fifty bays; next fifty chestnuts – and fifty more blacks closed the procession: the arms glittered; the horses' shoes shone twinkling on the fast moving feet.'

Following the Oregon Trail, they reached Fort Laramie, which was still a fur trade post, on 14 June, where they met local Sioux Indians. They exchanged gifts and demonstrated their martial skills to impress the warriors. A portion of the command then crossed the continental divide at South Pass, and rode south along the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Kearny's troops moved on to Bent's Fort, and from there followed the Santa Fe Trail back to Leavenworth. After ninety-nine days in the field and with the conclusion of 2,200 miles in the saddle, Kearny's men reached Leavenworth on 24 August 1845.

After meeting Apaches, Kiowas, and other tribes and gaining invaluable experiences on the Plains which would 'break down anything but a cast iron horse', Kearny returned to discover that 'war with Mexico so inevitable, that our distant march at this time has been criticized in camp'. Despite this, the lessons learned on the last excursion to the West, in the words of one noted historian, 'made it possible for the United States to patrol the prairies and plains and thus make effective American authority' on the frontier. It also hardened the Dragoons for a new test. They were about to face an impressive enemy south of the Rio Bravo.

War with Mexico

In 1845, with President James K. Polk's expansionist administration in the White House, the United States annexed Texas. To the south, Mexican authorities protested and sent an army to defend its national sovereignty. Mexico still considered a large segment of Texas its territory.

In response, General Zachery Taylor formed an 'Army of Observation' in Louisiana. Taylor's infantry forces went by ship to Corpus Christi, Texas, and seven companies of the Second Dragoons set out from Louisiana overland to rendezvous with them there. The Dragoons moved out on 25 July 1845. This was the hottest part of the season so the Dragoons went only twenty-five to thirty miles a day, leaving early in the morning and halting early in the day, before the sun reached its zenith. Sixty horses suffered from the effects of their new saddles. Their riders had to dismount and walk most of the way to Texas to let the steeds recover.

The Second Dragoons fared better once they arrived at General Taylor's camp in Corpus Christi. There the troopers trained, hunted, fished and raced their mounts. Marches and scouting patrols also

occupied their time. As the months passed, the Dragoons were joined by many other units. By October of 1845, nearly half the entire US army was concentrated in Texas. But further months passed without incident.

Then the lull gave way to action. On Sunday, 8 March 1846, at 10 am, the Dragoons and a battery of horse artillery spearheaded the march south. The remainder of Taylor's army followed over the next few days. By 16 March, a detachment of Dragoons serving as the lead element came upon some local *racheros* who informed the young officer in command that he should go no farther. Things began to heat up. The Mexicans set fire to the nearby Port Isabel, so it could not be used by Taylor's troops. But the Dragoons arrived at the port in time to extinguish the flames.

From there, the column continued towards the Rio Bravo, or as it was known in the United States, the Rio Grande. Not long after reaching the river, news arrived that the Mexicans were heading back towards Port Isabel, cutting them off. Captain Croghan Ker, with Companies D and E, was dispatched to ride the 27 miles back to the sea and report what he found. Galloping the distance in four hours, Ker discovered that the threat was an unfounded rumour. He turned his men around and they made their way back to the main body.

On 24 April, Ker and Companies D and E again were in the saddle to investigate the movements of

Charles May became a national hero as a result of his exploits during the war with Mexico. He evidently is wearing the undress uniform with an untrimmed coatee – which was authorised from 1833 to 1839 until the frock coat was adopted – and 1839-pattern shoulder straps. The gold oak leaves designated his rank as a lieutenant colonel of the Second Dragoons. The belt is non-regulation. (Library of Congress)

the Mexican military who now were just across the river. Captain S. B. Thorton, with Companies C and F, was also dispatched to gather intelligence. Ker failed to make contact with the enemy but Thorton saw Mexican horsemen near La Rosia. His squadron gave chase until they came to a field obscured by a high hedge. From behind cover, overwhelming numbers of Mexican lancers appeared. A short fight ensued. Thorton's horse went down and pinned his rider to the ground. Some of the men attempted to hurdle the hedge, but failed. Lieutenant George Mason and eight enlisted men were killed in the brisk, short battle. Two more men were wounded and they, with Captain Thorton and James Hardee, as well as the remainder of the command, were taken prisoner. The long anticipated war with Mexico had begun.

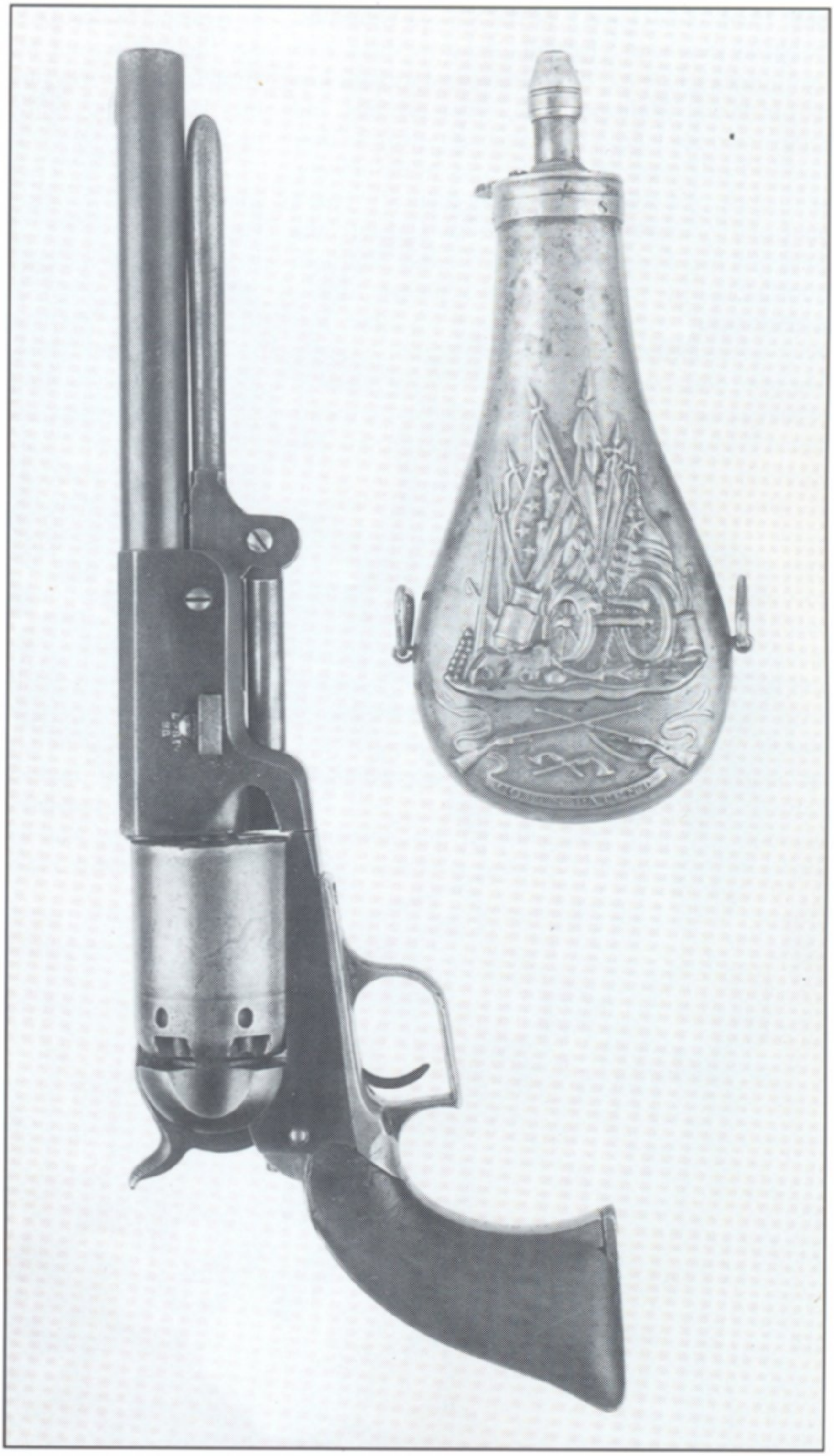
Taylor took to the field, leaving his small base camp on the river to a holding force. Not long after moving out, the general received word that the enemy was bombarding the fort they had constructed there. Captain Charles May rushed back with his squadron of Dragoons, reinforced by some of Captain Samuel Walker's Texas Rangers, to see if a siege was under way. Walker and some of his men were dispatched under the cover of night to reconnoitre. When they failed to return by daybreak, May turned back towards Taylor, but on his way his detail crossed paths with 150 Mexican lancers. May ordered a charge and chased the enemy for some three miles. With little further incident, his command made their way back to Port Isabel. The following night, Walker also reached camp there and reported that the fort at the river was holding its own.

Once he received this news, Taylor turned his attention to other matters. On 7 May 1846, he headed towards Matamoras where he believed the Mexicans were gathered. His right wing included most of the Second Dragoons, except for Ker's squadron which accompanied the left wing. The next day, May's squadron went into the fray, this time in support of an artillery battery. Facing an estimated 800 Mexican cavalrymen, he suffered several casualties and was forced to withdraw. Shortly thereafter, Ker's squadron, in support of the Eighth Infantry, withstood an attack. The day ended with no clear victory for either side.

On 9 May, the fighting resumed, this time at Resaca de la Palma. Ker's contingent, which was in the lead, discovered the Mexican force there and sounded the alarm. Again, Taylor dispatched May's

A Dragoon officer (left) watches a company of his comrades ride into action at Monterey, Mexico, with General Zachery Taylor and other members of the general's staff. Dragoons often served as escorts for high ranking officers, as well as members of various staffs for commanders.

The United States government ultimately purchased a number of Colt Model 1847 Whitneyville-Walker revolvers in .44 calibre, many of which eventually were issued to the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen. The flask was employed in loading this hefty six-shot handgun. (West Point Museum)



men, Companies D and E of the Second Dragoons, 'to charge the enemy's batteries and drive them from their pieces, which was rapidly executed with the loss of Lieutenant [Zebulon] Inge, seven privates, and eighteen horses killed', May later recorded. As they raced toward the enemy's artillery, one of the officers' spirited charger bolted ahead. May shouted: 'That's not fair; you took the jump on me.' Before the subaltern could reply, his horse was shot and both tumbled into a water-hole. The lieutenant disengaged himself with difficulty, losing his sabre. Just when he reached the bank, he 'seized a horse from a Mexican dragoon, took a sword from a Mexican officer, mounted his charger, and joined in the melee. When the battle was over, he returned the sword to its owner.'

Once the smoke cleared, May's hard-charging horse soldiers had not only captured the Mexican guns but also an enemy general. May's report of this encounter concluded with 'praise of the steadiness and gallantry of the officers and men of my command. They all behaved with that spirit of courage and noble daring which distinguished the whole army in this memorable action, and achieved the most brilliant victory of the age.' The press agreed, and he and his men soon became heroes around the United States.

Delighted with the action of his horsemen, Taylor used the Second Dragoons as an escort when he returned to Port Isabel on 10 May. The following day the unit set out for the outpost along the Rio Grande, which was now called Fort Brown. When they arrived, they found that Captain Thorton and his men had been returned by the Mexicans.

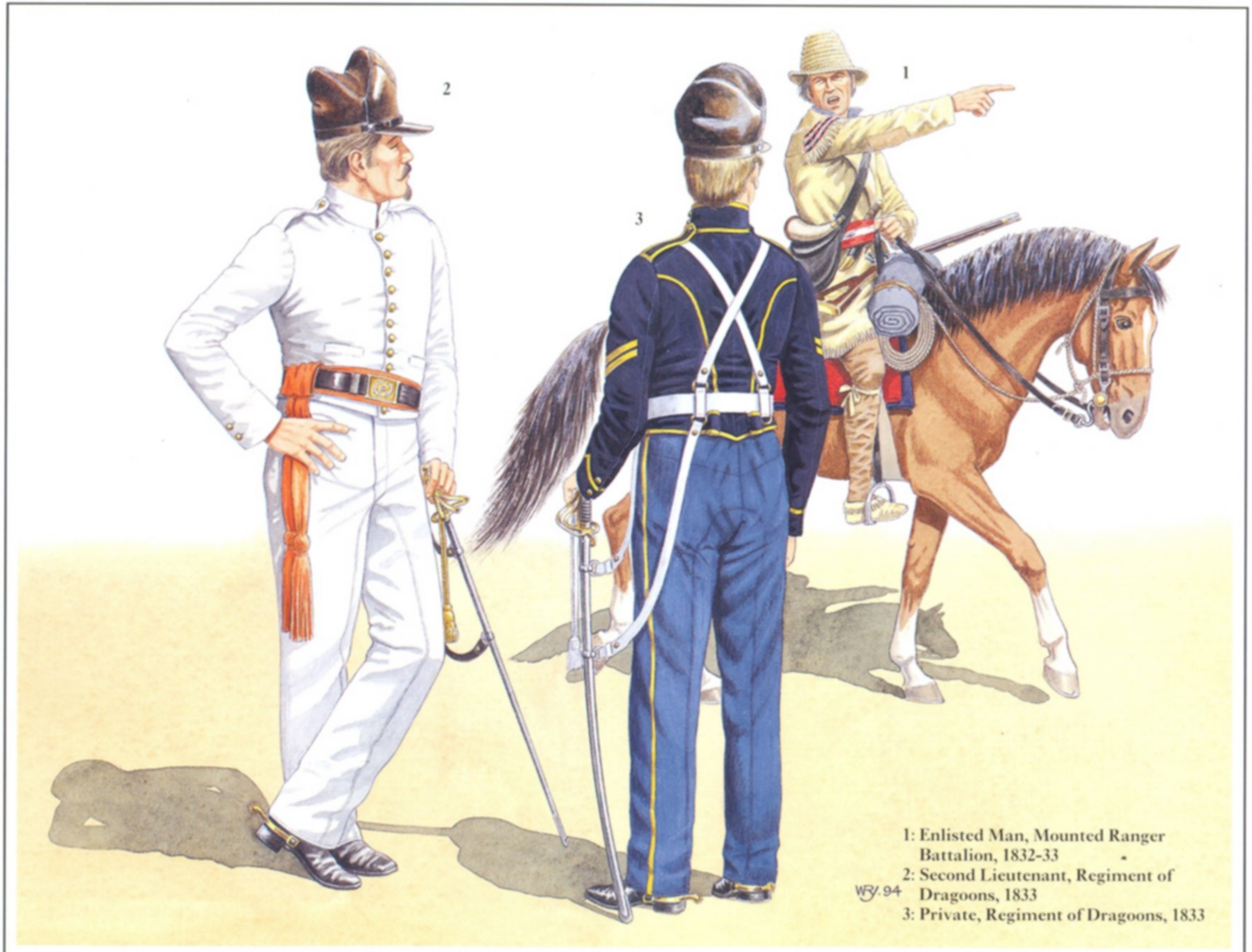
A week later, General Mario Arista abandoned Matamoras on 18 May. He had only just left when Captain Ker took the town. He raised the stars and stripes over Fort Paredas and his men gave three cheers. But there was no time for celebration. On 19 May, the Second Dragoons and two companies of Texas Rangers saddled up again to determine the whereabouts of the Mexican army. They found it on 22 May and returned to headquarters.

The next few months passed quietly as both sides reorganised and recuperated. Some of the companies went to Baltimore to recruit while Companies A and I, which had been maintaining peace with the local Native Americans and keeping open the lines of communication, now joined their comrades.

Kearny's Army of the West

The First Dragoons began to report in from the several far-flung posts which they had garrisoned before the war. Several companies rode toward Mexico to join Taylor. The remaining men marshalled at Fort Leavenworth under the leadership of Colonel Kearny, who was about to wear the stars of his new promotion as a brigadier general.

The 1847 smooth-bore musketoon is shown along with the valise and other items of horse equipment, including the 1847-pattern Grimsley saddle, in this 1851 rendering from Fort Snelling, Minnesota. (National Archives)



1: Enlisted Man, Mounted Ranger Battalion, 1832-33
2: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833
3: Private, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833

WRJ-94

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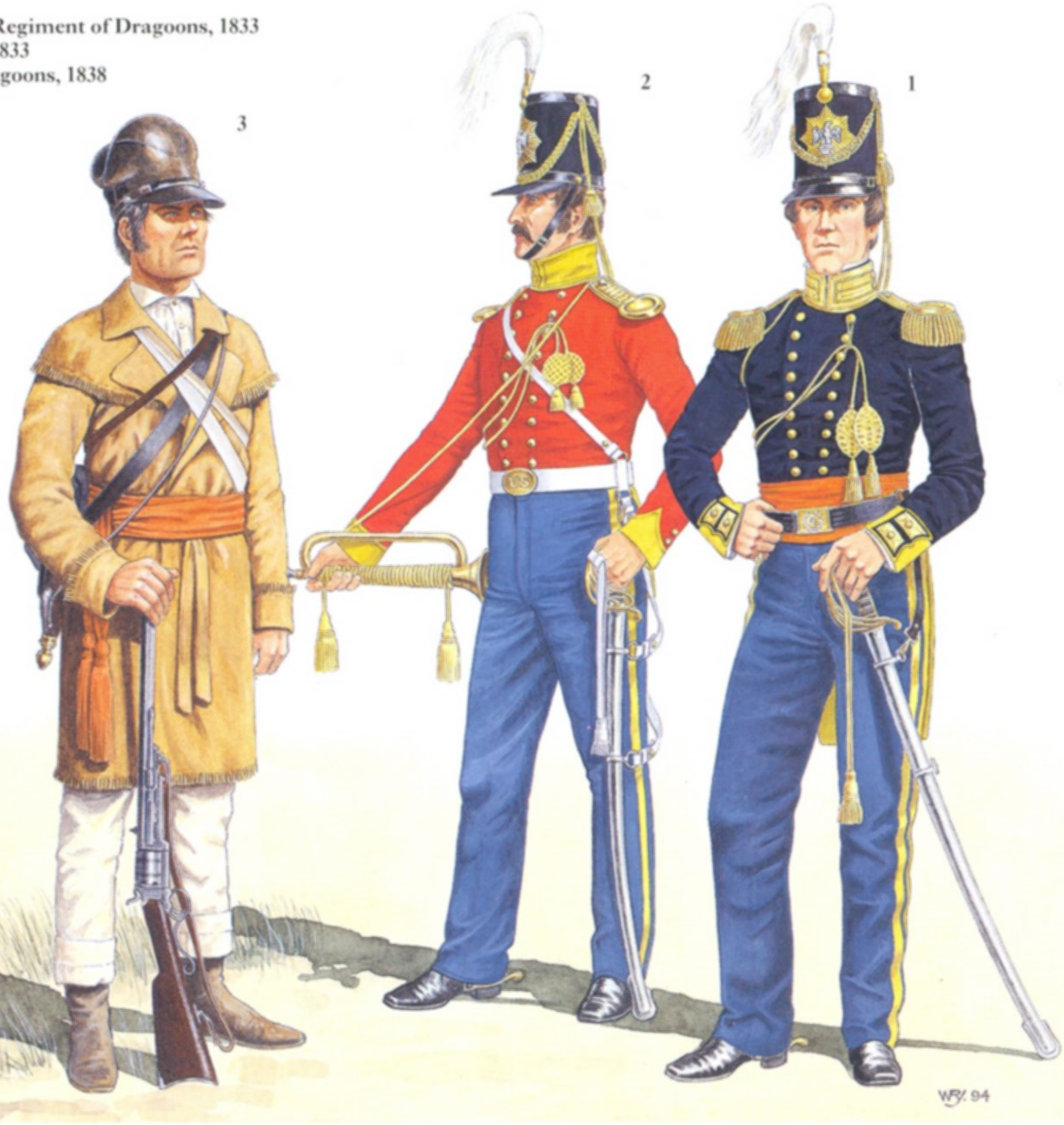
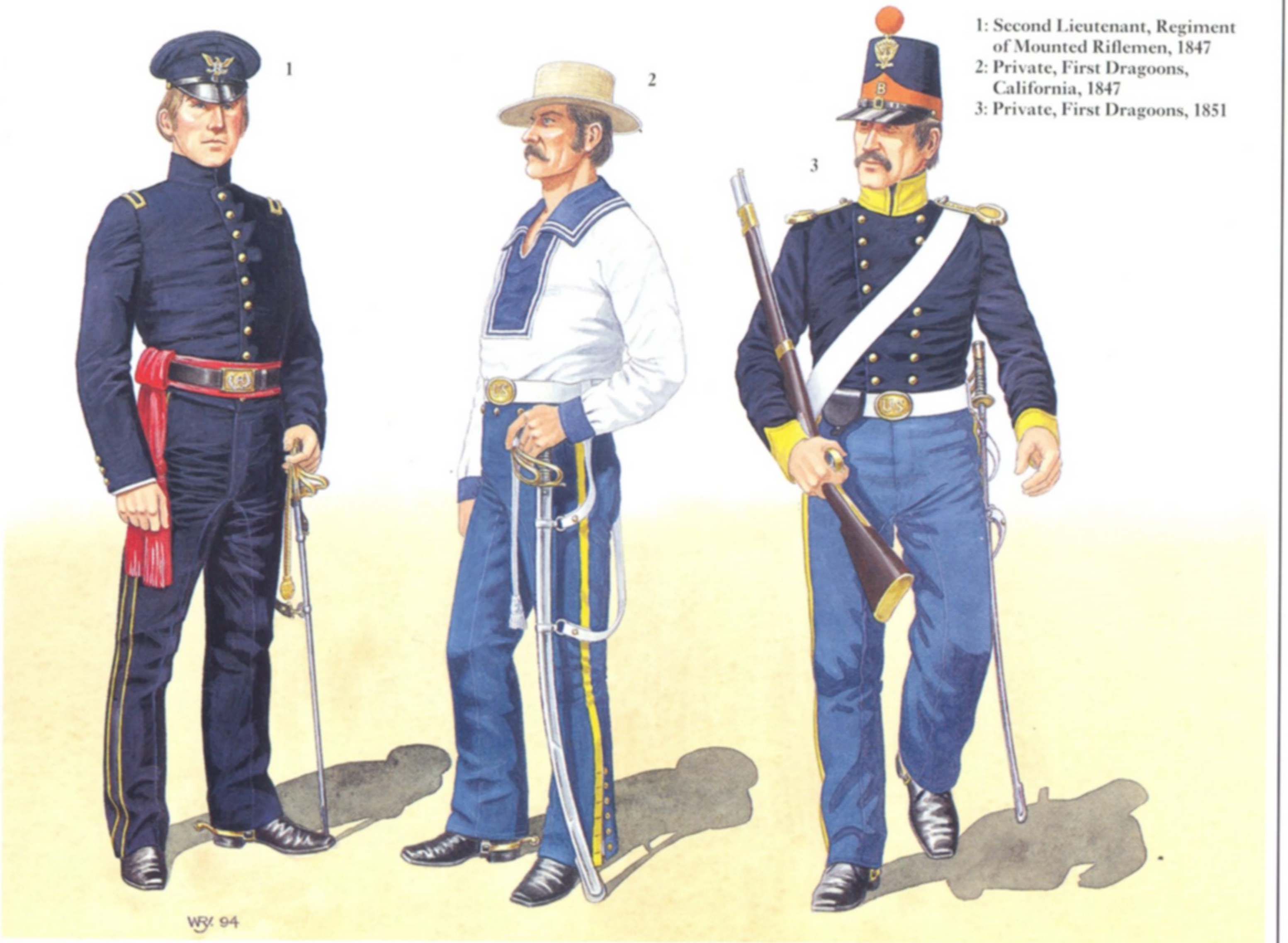
1: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833
2: Dragoon Musician, 1833
3: Captain, Second Dragoons, 1838



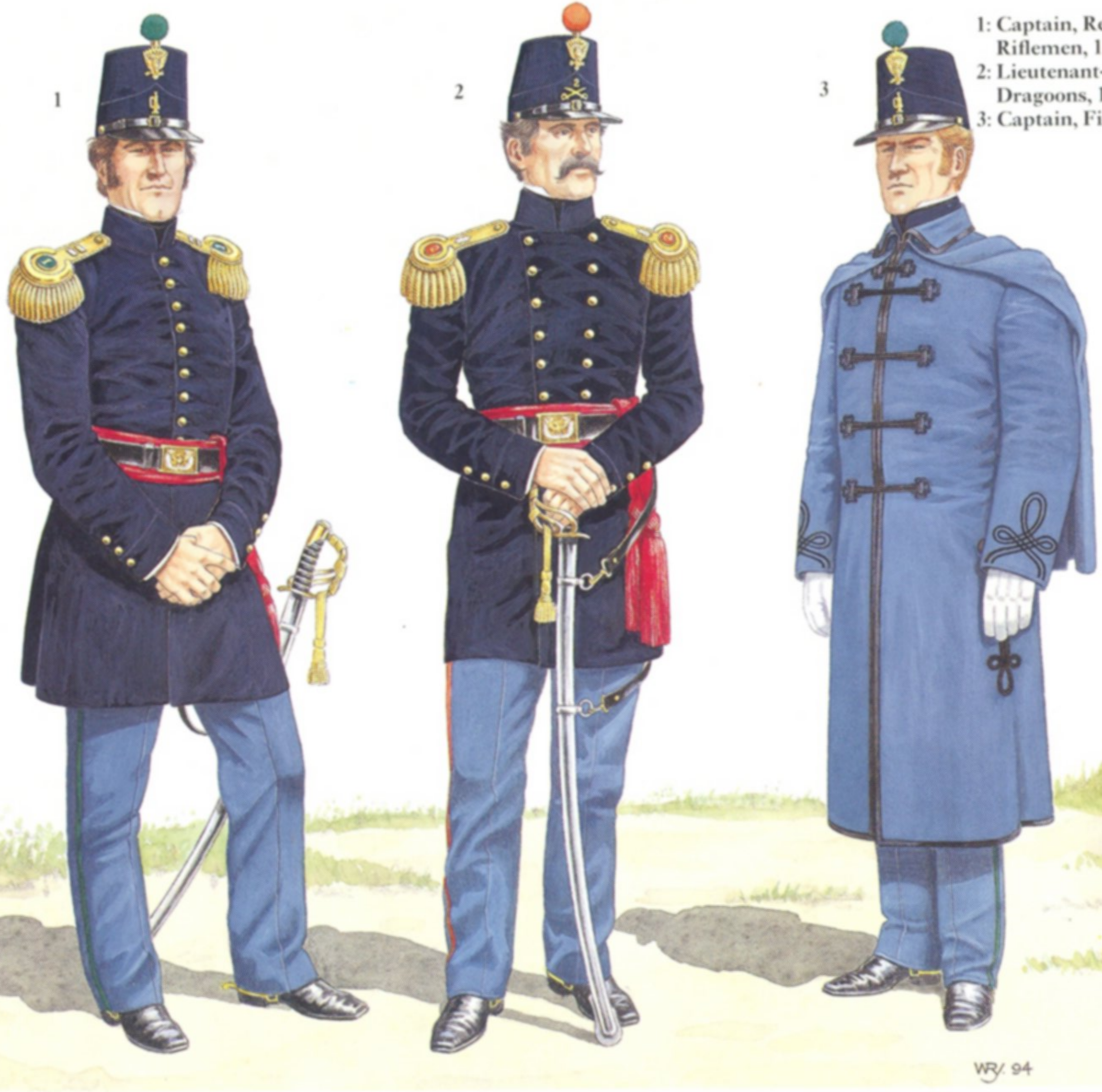
1: First Lieutenant, Winter Field Dress, 1839
2: Private, Second Dragoons, 1845
3: Musician, First Dragoon Band, 1846

1: Major, Second Dragoons, 1847
2: Colonel, Second Dragoons, 1847
3: Private, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1847



1: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1847
2: Private, First Dragoons, California, 1847
3: Private, First Dragoons, 1851

1: Captain, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1851
2: Lieutenant-colonel, Second Dragoons, 1851
3: Captain, First Dragoons, 1851



1: Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1851 WRV 94
2: Trumpeter, Second Dragoons, 1851
3: Private, Second Dragoons, campaign kit, Texas, 1852

1: Musician, First Dragoons, Dress Uniform, 1854
2: First Sergeant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, Field Uniform, 1854
3: Private, First Cavalry Regiment, Dress Uniform, 1855

Kearny's First Dragoon contingent consisted of Companies B, C, G, I, and H. They, along with some mounted volunteers from Missouri under A. W. Doniphan, two companies of infantry, and a pair of artillery companies, constituted the Army of the West. Their mission was to march to Bent's Fort, some 565 miles away, then head south to seize Santa Fe. Once this was accomplished, they were to continue their overland trek to the Pacific and secure California. Companies C and G of the First Dragoons led the way as escorts to the supply train. They moved out in early June. A few days later, Company I followed them, while the remaining troops, including Companies B and K, left Leavenworth on 6 July 1846.

Insects, heat and the other elements proved the only enemy on the trip. By the end of July, the force had consolidated at Bent's Fort. And in early August, it approached Santa Fe. Company K's commander Philip St. George Cooke left the column with a message to the Mexican governor, stating Kearny's intention to occupy the town peacefully. When the Army of the West entered Santa Fe, on 18 August, they faced no opposition. Kearny simply established a civil government and declared that New Mexico now belonged to the United States.

Just a little over a month later, Kearny's command was ready to forge ahead again, but not before the officers held a farewell ball for their general – 'a mixture of fandango and regimental hop in the big hall at the Governor's Palace'. Kearny left Colonel Doniphan at Santa Fe with an occupation force, until relieved by replacements. The General took his three hundred dragoons, a pair of mountain howitzers, and a detachment of topographical engineers west. Captain Cooke recorded their departure in his terse style:

> 'Tomorrow, three hundred wilderness-worn dragoons, in shabby and patched clothing, who have been on short allowance of food, set forth to conquer or annex a Pacific empire, to take a leap in the dark of a thousand miles of wild plains and mountains, only known in vague reports as unwatered, and with several deserts of two or three marches where a camel might starve, if not perish from thirst.'

Fortunately, along the route they met up with frontiersman Christopher 'Kit' Carson and some Delaware scouts. Carson's knowledge of the region made him invaluable to the success of the expedition. Kearny persuaded Carson to leave his own party, which was heading eastwards with dispatches to Washington, and join the Dragoons to guide them to California. The General also decided that Companies B and C would be adequate for the assignment in California. So, he dispatched Companies G, I and K under Major E. V. Sumner to Albuquerque. The General may well have regretted this decision once he reached the coast.

Over a month passed as Kearny's contingent rode westward. By early December, the two companies neared San Diego. About forty miles from that port they received word that local Mexicans meant to resist the 'gringos'. That was indeed the situation. Kearny's men had tired horses, or some which were not broken fully. Several even were afoot and the rains had rendered their firearms almost useless.

The *Californios*, on the other hand, were mounted on fine, fresh horses and carried long lances which they wielded with considerable expertise. In a sharp engagement, three officers, fifteen enlisted men and a civilian attached to Kearny's party were killed. Eleven enlisted men received wounds, along with four officers including the General. One of the survivors wrote: 'Our provisions are exhausted, our horses dead, our mules are on their last legs, and our men, now reduced by a third of their number, are ragged, worn down by fatigue and emaciated.'

Kearny ordered the dead buried and the wounded tended. He sent a messenger on to San Diego for assistance, but the naval officer in charge there replied that he could not come to the battered band's aid. With no help in sight, Kearny decided to press on to the port. Resuming the march the next day, the Americans again were confronted by *Californios*. The small party soon were driven from the field, but Kearny realised that he must take up a defensive position and seek reinforcements. This time Kit Carson carried the plea to San Diego. The local commander obliged and sent some 180 men to rescue the Dragoons and their comrades. And by 12 December the weary warriors reached San Diego.

In a letter home and a report to the adjutant general, Kearny claimed victory at San Pasqual, but he admitted to the high price paid stating: 'The loss of our killed is deeply felt by all, particularly myself.'

The Dragoons regrouped and waited for supplies and reinforcements. Then combining his forces with others in the region, Kearny left San Diego on 29 December bound for Los Angeles and continued his efforts to secure California.

South of the Border

While Kearny's portion of the First Dragoons carried on the conquest of California, remaining elements of the regiment headed for Mexico. In that group was a young rakish recruit by the name of Samuel Chamberlain. A self-confessed rogue, Chamberlain was a private in Company A of the First Dragoons when he went to Mexico with Brigadier General John Wool's Division in September of 1846.

On the trek towards the border, Chamberlain saw his first Comanches. Soon after he crossed into Mexico, the green trooper participated in two skirmishes with Mexican guerrillas. By his own account, Chamberlain acquitted himself well and came to consider he and his brother Dragoons the elite fighting force of the American Army. He proudly contended that his squadron consisted of: 'Lawyers, Actors, and men of the world, Soldiers who had served under Napoleon, Polish Lancers, French Cuirassiers, Hungarian Hussars, Irishmen who left the Queen's service to swear allegiance to Uncle Sam and wear the blue.'

The Second Dragoons found themselves in every fray from the opening salvos of the war to the battle of Chapultepec in September of 1847. Usually they performed reconnaissance and pursuit on horseback, but sometimes engaged the enemy infantry on foot. On 25 March 1847, Colonel William S. Harney ordered some of them to dismount and join the infantry on the right and left of Moreno Bridge, near Vera Cruz. A few bursts from the Yankee artillery opened the clash, followed by a charge from the troops on foot. The Mexicans withdrew across the bridge, but the remainder of the Dragoons, who had been kept mounted and in reserve, raced forward with drawn sabres to drive the attack home. Their daring sent the enemy into full retreat.

Another regiment of horse soldiers was formed at Jefferson Barracks and Fort McHenry, Maryland. Designated the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, it had been formed for duty along the overland trail to the Pacific Northwest, but due to the war it had been diverted to Mexico in the autumn of 1846. However, not long after it set out from New Orleans, the unit lost all its horses at sea. Eventually, two companies were provided with Mexican mounts, while the remainder of the regiment had to serve on foot. The Third Dragoon Regiment, a unit raised for the dura-

This 1851 sketch by a member of the garrison at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, depicts the dress uniform of a Dragoon first sergeant with the new diamond device in the centre that regulations adopted in 1847. The 'V' of the chevrons remained points down for the dress coatee, although they were to be points up on the field jacket. (National Archives)

The regimental standard of the First Regiment of Mounted Riflemen from the post-Mexican War period. (West Point Museum)

tion of the war, also found difficulties in obtaining horses. Even after it was mounted, the short-lived outfit saw little action, although it performed considerable escort and scouting duty.

The Conquest of California

In early January 1847, Kearny occupied Los Angeles. The next month, his replacement as regimental commander, Colonel Richard Mason, arrived by ship. He had instructions to assume the governorship as soon as Kearny thought it appropriate.

As fighting ended in California, Captain A. J. Smith's Company C of the First Dragoons withdrew to San Luis Rey. After a brief posting at the Catholic mission there, they were assigned to Los Angeles's central plaza, where they lived under canvas. As part of an occupation force, which consisted mostly of volunteers, they presented a motley appearance. Much of their original kit was worn out from the long overland march from Fort Leavenworth under Kearny. They had pressed some US Navy clothing into service for the time being, while awaiting the resupply of uniforms and other gear from the East Coast. They also were without their horses. Dismounted, the troopers spent some of their time in cannon drill. But they became bored, occasionally turning to liquor. When rowdy, they were less than courteous to many of the local inhabitants – some 1,500 civilians, most of whom did not speak English.

Idleness also took its toll on morale. One of the privates of Company C, John Smith, was accused of

forcibly entering quarters occupied by two officers and of stealing a leather trunk which contained a large sum of both public and private funds. A court-martial convened on 20 September 1847 to address these charges. One of the witnesses testified that she saw two men enter the dwelling where the two officers resided. She described one as being shorter and having 'on Dragoon pantaloons made in the manner of Calzonras – legs buttoned upon the side to the knee, he had on a blue shirt, stars on the collar and a cap on his head'. Evidently, the culprit was in the combined Navy and Army uniform, with some local modifications mixed in and a regulation cap. The other intruder was taller and said to have 'on Dragoon pantaloons, blue jacket with red cuffs' as well as 'a white Panama hat' which the witness judged to be new. This robber seemed to have been wearing an artillery jacket.

Testimony from another witness indicated that he had seen the accused earlier that night attired in 'soldier's pantaloons with stripes on, soldier's jacket and cap'. When questioned about whether there was 'anything peculiar in the make of the pantaloons . . . differing from those regularly worn by the soldier', the witness said he had not noticed the cut. The court then inquired as to whether Private Smith was 'in the habit of wearing a sailor shirt'. The reply was not 'for three or four months' – but one of the other men in the company, Private Bowen, was. Another enlisted man, Private John Chambers of Company C, stated that he saw Smith change into a blue shirt and trousers without stripes during the evening the crime was committed. Chambers further confirmed that Smith did have trousers which were split up the side of the leg and fashioned with buttons, and that he also owned a Panama hat.

This information and Smith's own words on the stand led to a conviction with a sentence of five years confinement and dishonourable discharge from the service. Afterwards, Smith's accomplice, Private John Stokely, was arraigned for burglary and theft. Found guilty, the court recommended leniency based upon the man's role in recovering the stolen money and because of Stokely's 'previous good character'. The court never pronounced sentence, however, because on the night of 9 December, the powder magazine, which was next to the guard house, exploded killing Stokely.

AFTER THE MEXICAN WAR

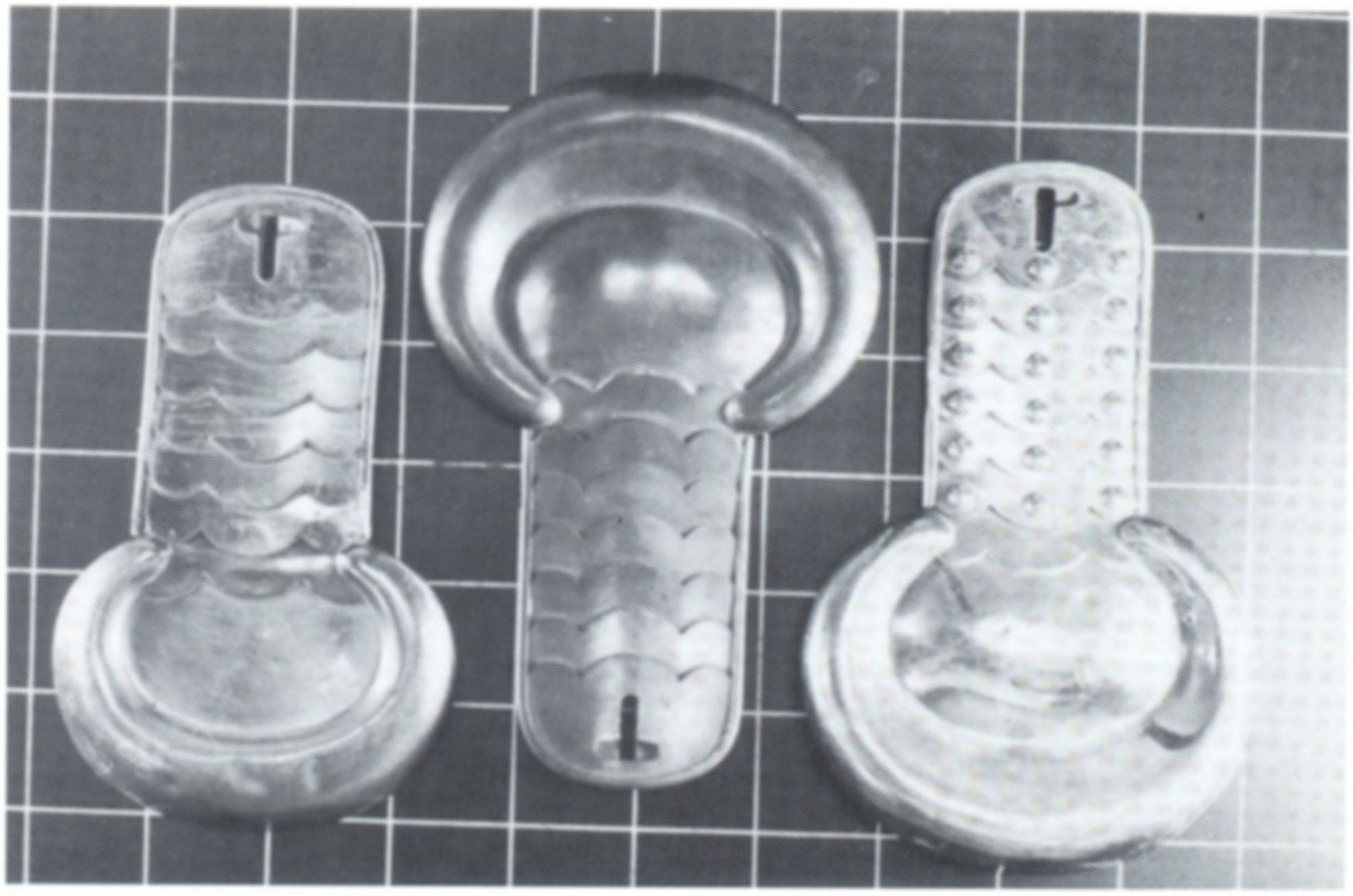
The Problems of Peace

Shortly after the treaty of peace between the United States and Mexico was signed, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. This triggered a rush of fortune hunters to the West Coast, and prompted desertions from the various military units then stationed there, including the Dragoons. One diary account from a '49er heading to the gold fields talked of a rumour about a band of Dragoons who had deserted with the expressed intention of robbing overland emigrant trains bound for the West. While unfounded, this tale indicates the chaos which reigned in California as the military commander there, Colonel Richard Mason of the First Dragoons, struggled to keep his force intact.

While hope of gaining wealth caused some of the horse soldiers to 'go over the hill', James A. Bennett, a young resident of Rochester, New York, who enlisted under the assumed name of James Bronson, saw joining the ranks as a means of reaching the far-away gold fields. In late 1849, this prospect along with the recruiter's offer of 'good board, clothing, medical attention' and the unfulfilled promise that a soldier 'had nothing to do but play the gentleman' led the under-age lad to enlist.

The next day, he regretted the move which would take him away from 'home, friends, and companions . . . perhaps forever' but there was no turning back. Soon, he sailed down the Hudson River to Governor's Island in New York harbour for rudimentary military training and was among about sixty or seventy other youths selected to learn to play the drum and fife. Bennett noted that his comrades came from all over the globe – 'Ethiopia accepted' (Blacks were not allowed in the regular army until 1866). There were Irish, German, French, Poles, Hungarians and English in his group. One of the Englishmen was constantly 'complaining of the bill of fare' which normally consisted of 'boiled beef, cabbage, and potatoes'.

Moving westward, Bennett arrived at Jefferson Barracks, the old home of the original regiment of Dragoons. There he was selected for duty and



Beginning in 1851, three types of brass shoulder scales were prescribed for dress wear. Left: privates, corporals and musicians. Middle: sergeants and first sergeants. Right: non-commissioned staff. (Smithsonian Institution)

shipped out for Fort Leavenworth in July of 1850. Before he arrived at this new post, some 104 of the contingent which originally left New York had either deserted or died. Nine men died of cholera on the short journey between St. Louis and Fort Leavenworth alone.

Disease and desertion continued to take its toll after Bennett arrived at Leavenworth, where he joined the garrison which consisted of two companies of Dragoons, two companies of artillery, and one company of infantry. Bennett noted the dead were 'thrown coffinless into the yawning pit. We wrap 4 to 5 daily in blankets, and throw their remains in the ground with a blessing or a prayer. No stone marks their last resting place. Consternation seized the camp and desertions continued in gangs from 3 to 8.' Bennett was one of the men sent out to look for some of the deserters who had headed to nearby Missouri. He returned empty-handed. Then he joined his comrades in mounting their horses with full equipment for the first time. 'It was laughable to see horses running in all directions, riderless. Some men flying in the air; others came back holding their heads,' he reported.

In early September, the contingent was on its way west. By the time it reached Council Grove and the Indian Mission, the cholera had all but disappeared. The column pressed on from there, following the Arkansas River for the next several weeks until it reached Fort Atkinson, which had been set up to protect travellers bound for the Southwest. The young soldier soon feared he would face his first enemy. On the night of 27 September:

> 'The sound as of distant thunder was heard. Louder, more distinct it sounded. Every one sprang to their feet. A dark form emerged, retreating again. On they came. "To arms! The foe! Comanche Indians!" burst from every lip. Horses were saddled in haste. All eyes watched the oncoming dust clouds. One who never practiced prayer since he left his mother's side dropped upon his knees. Suddenly the dust lifted and revealed an immense herd of buffalo which came madly rushing through our camp.'

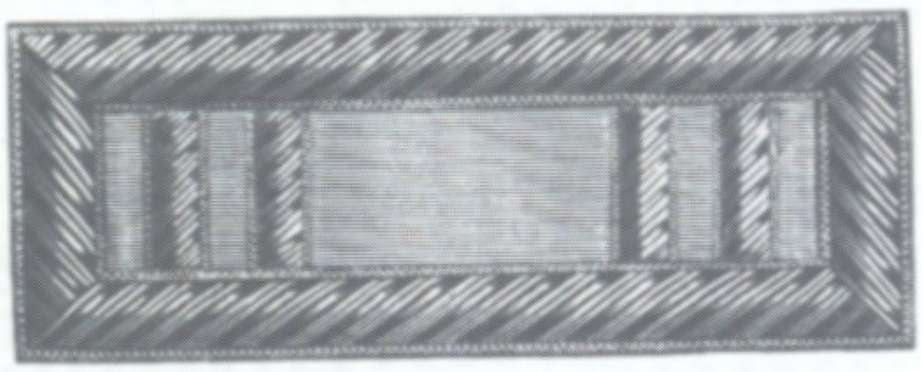
But next day he went off on his first buffalo hunt and pronounced it 'the most exciting amusement I ever had'. This excitement was compounded when an Indian, who had had a falling out with one of the officers, tried to stampede the command's horses. Bennett also had the opportunity to see Colonel May, who had just returned from Mexico and had joined his brother officers in a drinking spree. May and his comrades 'felt their brandy'. They soon refused to obey the post commander and when they 'were put under arrest, threatened to shoot him [the commander] but when the effects of the liquor were gone, their "bravado" went with it.'

After laying over at Fort Atkinson, the Dragoons moved on to Las Vegas, New Mexico. In camp there, the young trooper cleaned himself up and went into town where he heard music announcing a *fandango*. He went to investigate and 'found arrayed ladies of all shades from snowy white to a jet black; all dressed in gaudy attire and decorated with jewelry, principally brass'.

His stay in town proved short-lived. Bennett was ordered to report to Fort Union, New Mexico, with Company I, First Dragoons, at the end of October 1850. There he busied himself in the 'cleaning of arms, brushing of clothes, grooming of horses, burnishing of leather'. The recruits appeared in full uniform for roll call and an hour's drill, then 'received a long lecture from our Captain, William N. Grier, a fatherly old man who was designed for a Methodist minister but whose patriotic spirit exceeded his religious zeal'.

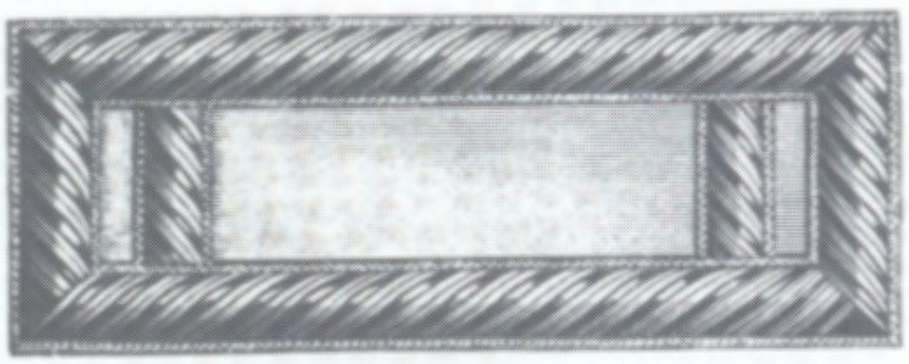
From then on it was drill without stirrups for two hours a day. Bennett described this as: 'Rather sore work but occasionally one is interrupted by the

During 1851, shoulder straps with orange centres for Dragoons and green centres for mounted rifles also were among the new uniform components adopted, in this case to indicate the rank of officers. The outer border was of gold embroidery. A silver eagle decorated colonels' shoulder straps, while silver and gold oak leaves indicated lieutenant colonels and majors respectively. Captains had a pair of gold bars at each end of their straps and first lieutenants exhibited single bars on their straps. Second lieutenants' straps were plain. In 1855, yellow cloth was prescribed as the backing for cavalry officers.



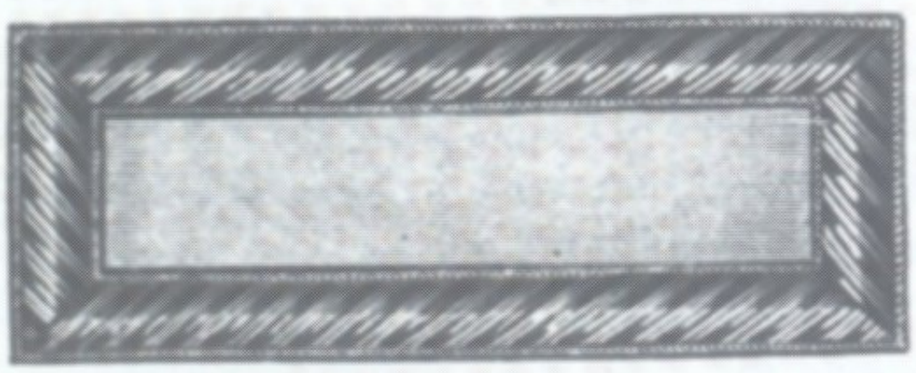
No. 99.
CAPTAIN.

No. 96.
COLONEL.



No. 100.
1st LIEUTENANT.

No. 97.
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL.
Major same as Lieutenant-Colonel, but Gold Embroidered Leaves.



No. 101.
2d LIEUTENANT.

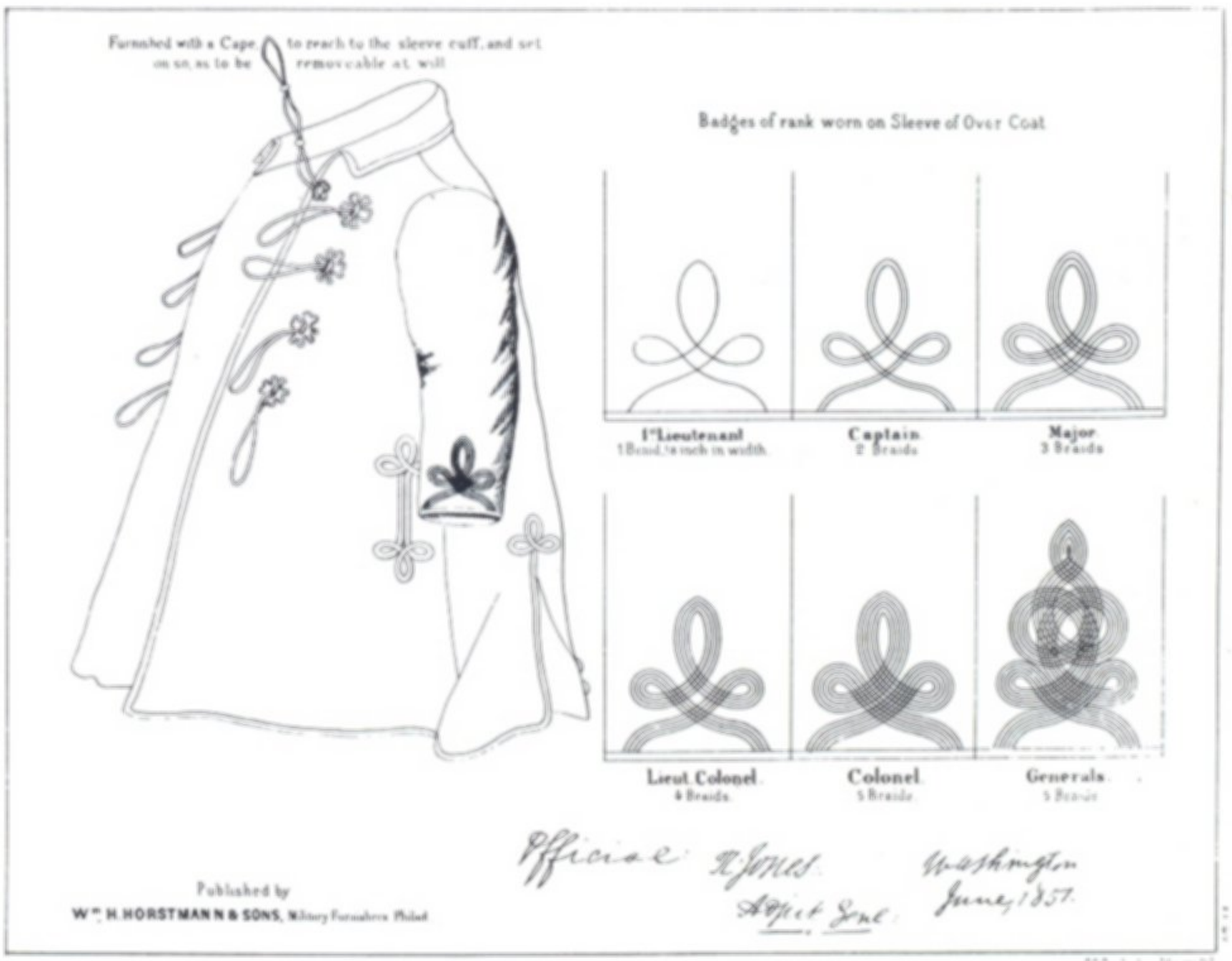
No. 98.
2d LIEUTENANT.
Medium Strap.

attraction of gravity'. When snow fell, drill ceased and Bennett began to study Spanish. Later, he was detailed to join twenty other troopers to escort the mail. In some places the snow was two feet deep making the going difficult. The mules starved and the men nearly froze to death along the way. After this, Bennett was part of a patrol which went out in pursuit of the Indians who had driven off 400 head of cattle from a local ranch. Kit Carson was the scout for this foray. By the end of November, the party came upon an Indian encampment and in a brief clash killed seven.

After the new year, Bennett went on mail escort duty again, this time to Santa Fe. There he saw Piute Indians being sold into slavery for $400 apiece. A brief layover also allowed him to attend another *fandango*. This time he joined in his first dance. He made what he thought must have been 'a ludicrous appearance'. As the evening wore on, 'the ladies indulged freely in wine, smoked a great many cigarritos, danced incessantly, and finally as midnight approached quarrels commenced'. 'Half a dozen women became excited, had their passions aroused, fought, pulled each other's hair, scratched each other's faces, tore each other's dresses, and were borne away by their friends in a flood of tears because their wrongs were unavenged,' Bennett reported.

In March 1854, now a considerably experienced trooper, Bennett was part of a detail which fell into an ambush sprung by a large force of Jicarilla Apaches. After an exchange which lasted some four hours, the Dragoons finally had to withdraw. As they retreated, Bennett was hit by a rifle ball which passed through both of his thighs. Nevertheless, he still managed to continue on foot for about a mile. Then he found two riderless mounts. He positioned himself between the horses and 'seized their stirrups'. They dragged him for about a half mile before he managed to pull himself into the saddle. With blood freely flowing, Bennett kept up with his command on a painful 25-mile ride. When they took him from his horse, they put him in hospital where he slowly recuperated for the next five months. Then he returned to duty.

Another adventurous spirit was drawn to the Dragoons at nearly the same time as Bennett. Percival Lowe enlisted in 1849 influenced by the romantic novels he had read in his youth. Lowe had visions of dashing frontier heroes and medieval knights on his mind when he signed on for a five-year stint in Boston. Soon, he was off to his first taste of



The 1851-pattern officer's heavy dark blue wool cloak coat with black braid was both practical and elegant. Flat black braid on the cuffs indicated rank. This garment remained regulation until 1872.

military life at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, for his primary military training.

With this phase completed, Lowe was sent to the First Dragoons at Fort Leavenworth. Eventually, he made his way to Fort Laramie as part of an escort. Over the next three years, Lowe rose to the rank of first sergeant. For the most part, Lowe's entire tour of duty was marked by routine. He enjoyed the quiet of garrison life with occasional routine marches among the various Native American groups who continued to be found throughout the West.

The experience of Bugler William Drown of the Second Dragoons was very different. He represented the other possible fate of a horse soldier in the half dozen years after the end of the War with Mexico. As a member of an expedition headed by Philip St. George Cooke, who by April 1854 was a lieutenant colonel, Drown found himself in the midst of a New Mexico blizzard. Men and horses shivered in the bitter cold and the animals nearly starved for lack of forage. Somehow the expedition pushed on, but later that next year Drown faced another test.

On the morning of 14 January 1855, Drown was ordered to blow 'Boots and Saddles'. In response, he says: 'Every man sprang for his saddle and his arms.' Ready for action, the Dragoons left the relative comfort of their post to pursue a band of Mescalero Apaches who had raided a nearby ranch. Drown's detail, under First Lieutenant Samuel D. Sturgis – who later commanded the Seventh Cavalry as colonel over his more famous subordinate, George A. Custer – succeeded in catching up with the Indians, who tried to parley with their pursuers. According to Drown's diary, Sturgis responded: 'Well, men, I do not understand one word they are saying; haul off and let them have it, and look out for yourselves.' With that, the Dragoons opened fire with their musketoons and pistols.

The Apaches did an about face and rode away as fast as their ponies would carry them. The cold inhibited reloading, so some of the Dragoons drew their sabres and gave chase. Drown still had some rounds left in his Colt, and spying 'a very large Indian amongst them . . . I picked him for my man, as he was the nearest to me, and I rode up to about 20 yards of him and gave him a shot from my revolver while he was in the act of firing an arrow at another man.' Drown found his mark, hitting the brave warrior in the thigh. This did not halt the wounded Apache, but a slug from another Dragoon's musketoon brought the man down.

With only one more shot in his revolver, Drown continued to give chase, this time to 'another Indian making for the woods'. Spurring his horse Boston, Drown dashed past the men whom he fired on earlier, whom he supposed had been killed when he toppled from his horse. But the hardy Mescalero was not dead and let fly with his own muzzle loader. The ball entered the back of Drown's 'right shoulder near the center', passed through and exited the front.

But Drown continued to pursue his quarry. Coming to within fifteen yards of the man, Drown recounted: 'I raised my pistol and brought it down on a level for him, and was just ready to pull the trigger when I found my hand kept falling, and that I had not sufficient strength in my arm to hold up the pistol.' Another Dragoon killed the lance-wielding Mescalero with his sabre. Drown survived.

The 1854-pattern trumpeter shell jacket featured additional ornamentation of worsted tape on the front to set the musicians apart from the rank and file. (Smithsonian Institution)

Two Cavalry Regiments Raised

By 1855, Bennett, Lowe, Drown and their comrades in the First and Second Dragoons and the Regiment of Mounted Rifles were joined by other horse soldiers. The First and Second Cavalry regiments were raised by the United States Congress on 3 March that year. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner assumed command of the First, Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston the Second Cavalry. The two units barely had assembled at their respective duty stations at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Territory, and Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, when Sumner received orders to take to the field and Johnston rode with his troopers to Texas.

During the same period, the First Cavalry attempted to maintain order between abolitionist and pro-slavery factions who fought over Kansas's status pending its admission to the union. Would it be a free state or another bastion for slave holders? During the same period, the Second fought in numerous skirmishes with the Comanche, Kiowa, and other bands that roamed the Lone Star State. When not occupied in Kansas's growing sectional conflict, Sumner's men responded to the Cheyenne's increased unrest, as the tide of westward expansion rose. In 1856, Captain G. H. Stewart led a company and a half of troopers on a punitive expedition against a war party which had attacked the Salt Lake City mail coach. Stewart attacked their village, killing ten warriors and wounding ten more. But the Cheyenne soon rallied and pursued Stewart on his return march.

During the following summer, Colonel Sumner was determined to quell the Cheyenne. On 29 July 1857, along the banks of the Solomon River, he found a large body of the enemy 'drawn up in battle array, with their left resting upon the stream and their right covered by a bluff'. Facing an estimated 300 warriors, the colonel brought his six companies 'into a line, and, without halting, detached the two flank companies at a gallop to turn their flanks'. Standing their ground, the resolute Cheyenne awaited the bluecoats' onslaught. But instead of charging with pistol or carbine, 'Old Bull' – as Sumner was nicknamed – called for sabres to be drawn and brought to 'tierce point' – that is, straight out in front. Galloping forward, the line of gleaming blades sent the Indians

The 1854-pattern engineer cap may have been used for a brief period by cavalryment until their distinctive hat was made available. (Smithsonian Institution)

in all directions. Sumner's bravado won the day. He lost two killed and eleven wounded, including Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart. But the villagers fled, leaving behind 171 lodges and their belongings, which Sumner ordered destroyed.

During that same July, Lieutenant J. B. Hood led his company of the Second Cavalry on an equally dramatic foray in Texas. Seeing a band of Native Americans at a distance, Hood proceeded cautiously. He moved ahead to parley, halting nearly thirty yards away from five warriors who carried a flag. At this point the Indians dropped their sign of truce and set fire to brush which they had collected to make a smoke screen. Then, thirty Indians rose up from behind Spanish bayonet plants which were within ten paces of the troopers. Armed with bows, arrows, and firearms they fell upon Hood's men. In response, the patrol let out a yell and made a charge at their attackers. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The pony soldiers were outnumbered two to one and had to withdraw, covering their orderly retreat with fire from their Colt revolvers. A half dozen had been killed or wounded. Hood himself was wounded but

The Perry carbine was one of three other options issued to select companies of the First and Second Cavalry Regiments in 1855. The other arms were the Merrill, Latrobe & Thomas .54 calibre breech-loading percussion carbine and the 1855 Springfield rifle-carbine. (Smithsonian Institution)

survived to become a general in the Civil War. He managed to collect the survivors and make it back to base camp for medical aid and supplies. This was one of at least forty firefights the Second experienced while in Texas. In fact, hostilities increased to the point that five companies of the First Cavalry joined the Second during an 1859-campaign against Indians and Mexican raiders along the Rio Grande.

But this was the end of the early history of the American horse soldier. Powerful forces soon would draw them away from frontier duty as storm clouds gathered between the North and South. Soon, these frontier troopers faced new challenges when the American Civil War erupted in 1861. On more than one occasion, old comrades would oppose each other during the bloody conflict which tore the nation apart.

THE PLATES

A1: Enlisted Man, Mounted Ranger Battalion, 1832–33

The short-lived US Mounted Ranger Battalion, as befitted the irregular nature of the frontiersmen who made up the unit, dressed in whatever they pleased. Buckskin was probably the preferred material, if Captain Jesse Bean's company was representative of the entire organisation. The captain preferred a 'leather hunting shirt and leggings, and a leathern forage cap'. Dressed deerskin leggings likewise appeared to be the order of the day, while cloth generally was of a homespun nature and headgear whatever suited the wearer, including some made of straw with high domed crowns. Powder horns, bullet pouches, large belt knives, and various flintlock rifles completed the practical kit.

A2: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833

The summer uniform afforded some comfort against the heat of the West. White linen trousers and a nine-button roundabout of the same material replaced the wool winter issue. Regulations failed to mention any insignia of rank, although shoulder-straps were adopted in 1836 for the winter version of the jacket. An officer's sabre belt and an 1833-pattern Dragoon

officer's sabre ornamented with a gilt lace sabre knot, were basic, as was the orange silk sash which wrapped around the waist twice and tied at the right hip. Black bootees fitted with gilt spurs, the 1832-pattern leather forage cap, along with the 1833-pattern Dragoon officer's sabre belt formed other elements of the field kit for hot weather wear.

A3: Private, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833

The winter field uniform consisted of a plain dark blue wool roundabout which closed with twelve small brass eagle buttons, the shield of which bore a 'D'. There was a small external pocket for caps to be used with percussion firearms. Light blue wool trousers with half-inch yellow stripes down the outer seams of facing material (single stripes for privates and corporals and double stripes for all others), a black leather 1832-pattern forage cap with chin strap, black bootees with brass spurs, and a white sabre belt with cross-strap arrangement, which helped to hold both the enlisted sabre on the left side and Hall carbine on the right, also were regulation.

B1: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Dragoons, 1833

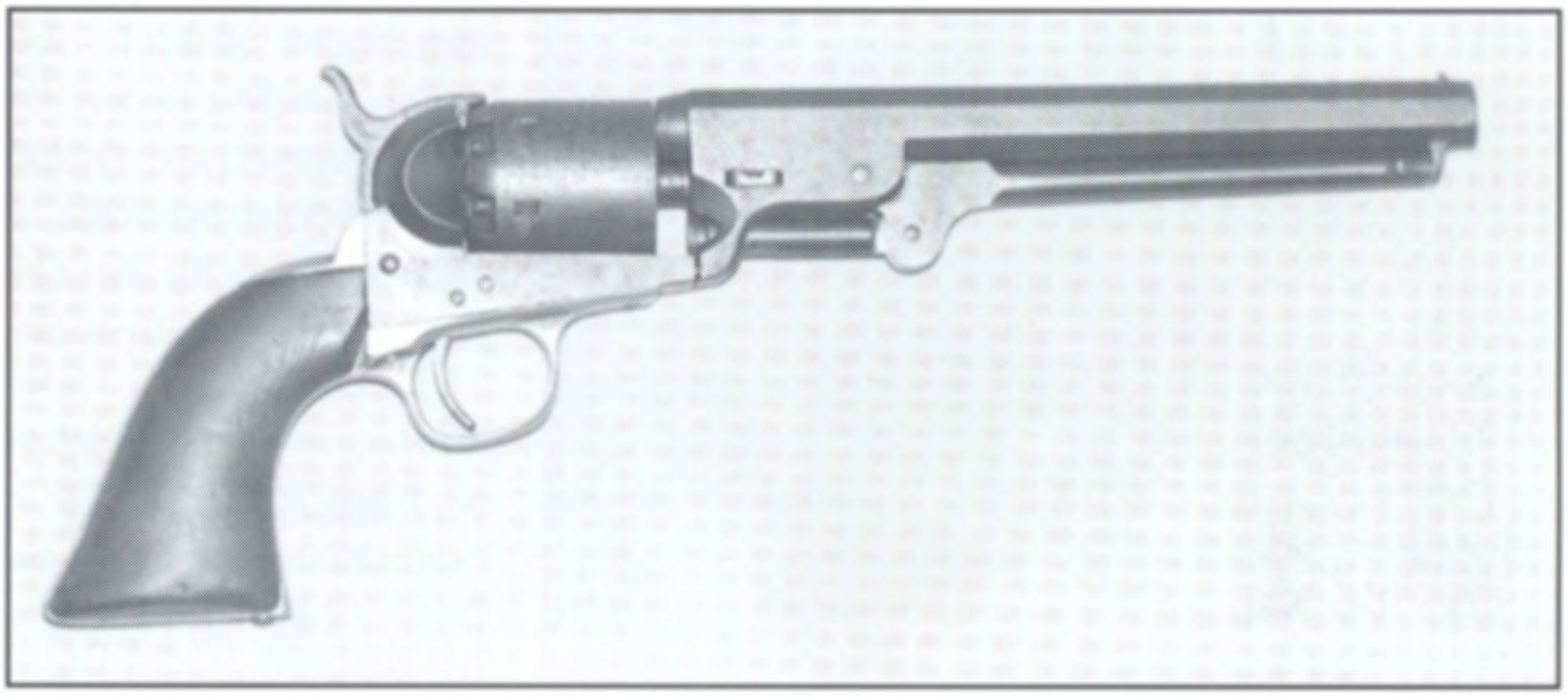
Resembling the uniform of some of its counterparts in Great Britain, the officer's dress uniform of the Regiment of Dragoons consisted of a double-breasted coatee of dark blue wool with yellow facing material on the cuffs, collar and turnbacks. Ornamental gold lace trimmed the collar while two gold lace borders surrounded the buttons on the cuffs for lieutenants, three for captains, and four for field grade officers. Gilt epaulettes (except for majors who had gold fringe, border and crescent with a silver bullion strap) topped the shoulders with fringe size serving as the chief means to indicate rank, with the exception of colonels who also displayed a silver eagle device. A colonel's fringe was a half-inch in diameter as was a lieutenant colonel's and major's, while a quarter-inch diameter fringe was for captains and one-eighth-inch diameter fringe was prescribed for lieutenants. Light blue wool trousers with double yellow stripes of facing material were prescribed for company grade officers. Dark blue versions with double gold lace stripes set off field grade officers.

B2: Dragoon Musician, 1833

The 1833–51-pattern coatees for regimental musicians and company trumpeters of the dragoons were to be of scarlet with yellow facings and turnbacks, otherwise the uniform was identical to that of the other enlisted personnel of the regiment, including the tall cap with falling plume, yellow caplines, and blue-grey trousers.

B3: Captain, Second Dragoons, 1838

Many of the newly organised Second Dragoons found themselves afoot for their first field assignments in the swamps of Florida on campaign against the Seminoles. The Everglades took their toll on the issue uniform, forcing many to adopt whatever clothing they could obtain, including civilian hunting shirts of leather or cloth, which have been combined here with regulation white canvas trousers and the 1832-leather forage cap. This captain (although only the orange sash indicates that he is an officer) has acquired infantry accoutrements and carries the Colt-revolving rifle which was issued to some of the Second Dragoons in 1838 and 1839.



The Model 1851 Colt 'Navy' fired a .36 calibre projectile and provided six rounds when the trooper had to engage the enemy at close range. (Greg Harmon Collection)

C1: First Lieutenant, Winter Field Dress, 1839
In 1839 a single-breasted frock coat with from eight to ten officer's buttons (depending on the wearer's height) was authorised for field, campaign and other similar duties for lieutenants and captains, which was worn along with light blue trousers that bore no stripes. A new distinctive shoulder strap for officers and a new cloth cap of dark blue wool for both officers and men of the two Dragoon regiments represented other changes to the uniform in that year.

C2: Private, Second Dragoons, 1845
By the Mexican War, Second Dragoon enlisted men had unofficially adopted a yellow worsted headband for their caps, distinguishing these troopers from those in the First Dragoons. Here, the corporal has let down the rear flap of his cap to protect the neck.

C3: Musician, First Dragoon Band, 1846
A double-breasted sky-blue overcoat with attached cape of matching material was prescribed for cold or inclement weather. All Dragoons donned this garb when the elements dictated its use. The cap bears twin yellow worsted lace and regimental numeral and the trousers exhibit the double row of yellow tape along the outer seams all of which was authorised in 1846 for bandsmen of the First Dragoons.

D1: Major, Second Dragoons, 1847
During the summer months white trousers could be worn with the frock coat from 1 May to 30 September, as a major of the Second Dragoons has elected to do here with his double-breasted frock coat that had been authorised for field and campaign in 1847. Each row of the coat bore seven Dragoon officer's buttons.

D2: Colonel, Second Dragoons, 1847
The tall cap or shako was replaced in 1847 with a chapeau for colonels of the Dragoon regiments, when they wore their dress coatees. The feathers were red

Military authorities called for the Springfield Model 1855 pistol-carbine with removable stock for some of the companies of the First and Second Cavalry and these regiments were formed in 1855. This .58 calibre weapon was a single-shot muzzle-loader which could double as a pistol or a carbine. (Smithsonian Institution)

on top and white at the base. Shoulder cords and a breast cord remained part of the dress uniform, as did dark blue trousers with a pair of gold lace stripes down the outer seam.

D3: Private, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1847

Enlisted personnel of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen were issued the same uniform as their counterparts in the three Dragoon regiments of the Mexican War, with the exception of dark blue trousers with black stripes bordered by yellow welts. They carried the so-called 'Mississippi' rifle and may have adopted infantry accoutrements, as seen here, instead of the 1839-pattern mounted sabre belt. A large Bowie-style 'rifleman's' knife likewise eventually was prescribed for them.

E1: Second Lieutenant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1847

Officers in the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen had the same field uniform as their comrades in the Dragoons (there were no dress uniforms authorised for any member of the regiment until 1851), but once again they had dark blue trousers with black leg stripes bordered in yellow. In addition, their caps displayed a gold embroidered spread eagle with a silver 'R' in the centre of a shield which appeared on the insignia, as well as in the centre of the belt plate. Finally, they had a crimson sash rather than one of orange. This individual wears the shoulder straps prescribed for all officers, except Dragoons, based upon a contemporary photographic image.

E2: Private, First Dragoons, California, 1847

Supply problems in California during the Mexican War necessitated supplemental clothing which was non-regulation including US Navy jumpers and a straw hat along with Dragoon trousers which had been further modified by the additional buttons on the lower leg in the manner which was popular among the local *Californios.*

E3: Private, First Dragoons, 1851

The new 1851-pattern cap with orange band of facing material in some instances was issued for use with the old 1833-pattern coatee, trousers, and shoulder scales as well as the old white buff accoutrements. The private shown here carries the 1847 musketoon as well as the 1840 sabre. In 1852 the new coat began to replace the old coatee for some enlisted men in the two Dragoon regiments, but for the most part the new cap became available before the 1851-pattern coat was issued.

F1: Captain, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1851

Along with all other officers, the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen were to adopt a new uniform after 1851. A dark blue single-breasted frock coat with gold epaulettes bearing a gold embroidered number one in the centre of an emerald green field formed part of the dress uniform. A pair of silver bars indicated the rank of captain and a single silver bar was used for first lieutenants, with second lieutenants having no bars at all. A crimson silk sash, light blue trousers with reinforcement and a one-eighth-inch emerald green welt along with a new cap that was surmounted by a green pompon held in place by an eagle device above a vertical bugle, were other components of the kit for formal occasions.

F2: Lieutenant Colonel, Second Dragoons, 1851

Dragoon field grade officers and those in the Mounted Rifles were to have double-breasted coats with seven buttons in each row. Epaulettes had thicker fringe than that allotted to lieutenants and captains and regulations called for an eagle in silver for colonels and silver oak leaves for lieutenant colonels, while majors had no leaves at all. Also, a silver regimental numeral appeared on an orange backed circle which was enclosed in gold. An orange pompon and orange welts on the trousers were the other means of delineating Dragoon officers, along with crossed gold embroidered sabres bearing a silver embroidered numeral above (a 1 for the First Dragoons; a 2 for the Second).

F3: Captain, First Dragoons, 1851

The new 1851 uniform regulations introduced a double-breasted dark blue overcoat with four black frogs on the chest and a detachable 'cloak coat' for officers which was influenced heavily by French styles. Rank was indicated by black mohair galoons at the cuffs, in this case with two strands representing a captain. The regulation officer's trousers and cap

were worn along with the overcoat which remained standard through 1872.

G1: Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 1851

Because the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen had only a field uniform when they were organised, the enlisted personnel of this unit may have been among the first to receive the new regulation cap with green pompon and dark blue wool coat with green cuffs and collar for formal wear. Metal shoulder scales evidently were used too in three styles to indicate rank. Emerald green chevrons were another means to indicate rank. Worn points down, above the elbow on each sleeve, non-commissioned officers from corporals to first sergeants had stripes made of worsted tape sewn to blue wool backgrounds of the same type of cloth as the jacket. The sergeant major and regimental quartermaster-sergeant (shown here with a tie of three bars above the 'V' of three stripes) sported chevrons made of silk tape. All regimental staff non-commissioned officers likewise were to wear scarlet worsted sashes on formal occasions, as were first sergeants. These were wrapped about the waist twice and tied at the left hip. Supposedly, this uniform served for field wear when the pompon was removed, but in fact old-pattern shell jackets with newly applied green tape were authorised by general orders in 1852, this garment along with the 1833-pattern forage cap and other types of headgear probably being the norm for field service.

G2: Trumpeter, Second Dragoons, 1851

In 1851, general orders called for a plastron front of orange facing material which easily identified bandsmen and company buglers of the Dragoons. A brass numeral on the collar indicated the wearer's regiment. Brass letters went on the caps of company trumpeters while the caps of the regimental band bore no such insignia, although the brass eagle device attached to the orange pompon still was used when not on campaign or under other similar conditions. Few of the new coats were issued until later in the decade, and some even were 'cut down for fatigue wear' in the mid-1850s once the shell jacket was reintroduced.

By 1851 lieutenants and captains of mounted units wore single-breasted nine-button dark blue wool frock coats with epaulettes for formal occasions, as depicted here by Captain Thomas Wood of the First Cavalry. This officer has retained the 1855 gold cord on his hat which he has tightened around the crown. He also has added the embroidered crossed sabres with regimental numeral below as called for in 1858. His dark blue trousers likewise indicates that this photo was taken after 1858 when the colour of trousers changed to a deeper hue. (US Army Military History Research Collection)

G3: Private, Second Dragoons, Campaign Kit, Texas, 1853

Percival Lowe recalled that as a corporal in the Second Dragoons serving in Texas some of his company had wide-brimmed 'drab hats' with flannel 'blue shirts worn in the field in place of the regulation uniform'. Lowe also noted he bought a 'very large red and silk kerchief' which he tied around his 'hat and brought it around so as to cover my neck and most of my face to keep off the sun and the pestiferous gnats'.

H1: Musician, First Dragoons, Dress Uniform, 1854

In 1854, regulations called for a return to the roundabout or shell jacket for enlisted men of Dragoons, this time with orange lace as trim, and evidently also introduced a special design reminiscent of the plastron specified in 1851. Brass collar numerals were regulation through 1857, although they may have been discarded in many instances. Trouser stripes were discontinued at the same time for enlisted personnel but the 1851-pattern chevrons remained in use as did service chevrons to indicate each five-year period of 'faithful' completion of duty, affixing above the cuff at approximately a 45-degree angle, and in the colour of the branch the wearer served in at the time of the enlistment. Service in war was depicted by a scarlet border on each side of the basic stripe.

H2: First Sergeant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, Field Uniform, 1854

Brass shoulder scales, the eagle and pompon, and brass collar numerals were several of the items set aside for the field by the mounted riflemen, who is shown here in the 1854 regulation shell jacket with green trim and first sergeant's chevrons of worsted wool. The 1849 Ames knife made for this regiment and the 'Mississippi' Rifle, which was another trademark of the unit, remained standard weapons for these mobile troops.

H3: Private, First Cavalry Regiment, Dress Uniform, 1855

The enlisted cavalry hat prescribed in 1855 bore a large sheet brass company numeral on the front. The right side was held in place by a small brass button, of the type worn on the shell jacket, over which was looped a small piece of worsted yellow cord. A yellow cord, draped on the front and back completed the decoration. The enlisted jacket, which closed with twelve small general service buttons, differed little from that worn by the other mounted regiments; the trim being the only distinguishing element. Light yellow worsted tape decorated the outer edges, rear seems, collar, and cuffs of the blue waist-length garment. Sheet brass regimental numerals were to be affixed, one on each side of the collar. Brass shoulder scales, in three different patterns, delineated non-commissioned staff, sergeants, and lower ranking personnel. These were removed by means of a brass turn-key device and a brass staple which held this vestige of armour in place.

The original 1855-pattern cavalry officer's hat featured a gold festooned cord which draped from the sides to the base of the crown. A similar cord, which terminated in acorn devices, ran around the brim. Silver embroidered regimental numerals were affixed to the front of the crown and a gold embroidered coat of arms attached to the right side, looping up the brim. (Smithsonian Institution)

Notes sur les planches en couleur

A1 La nature mercenaire des broussards qui composaient le Mounted Ranger Bataillon est dépeinte ici. Ils portent une culotte de daim et des vêtements tissés au métier. Son matériel pratique comporte une corne à poudre, un sac à balles, un grand couteau de ceinture et un fusil à pierre. **A2** Uniforme d'été, pantalon de lin blanc et 'roundabout' à neuf boutons, qui remplaçait l'uniforme d'hiver en laine de ce jeune officier. Il porte également la ceinture de soie orange des officiers, le shako en cuir modèle 1832 et le sabre des officiers des dragons modèle 1833. **A3** Ce simple soldat porte l'uniforme de campagne d'hiver, composé d'un 'roundabout' bleu foncé en laine, de pantalons de laine bleu clair et d'un shako en cuir noir modèle 1832. Sa ceinture blanche et ses bandoulières maintiennent son sabre réglementaire et sa carabine Hall.

B1 L'uniforme de service de ce jeune officier est composé d'un manteau à double boutonnage en laine bleu foncé avec col bordé de passepoil doré, épaulettes dorées et pantalon de laine bleu clair avec doubles rayures jaunes en tissu de parement. **B2** Le musicien des dragons dépeint ici porte le manteau de modèle-1833-51 spécifié pour les musiciens régimentaires. **B3** Ce Capitaine des Dragons a remplacé son uniforme de campagne par certains vêtements civils dont une chemise de chasse. Il a également acquis des accoutrements d'infanterie et porte un revolver Colt.

C1 Le Lieutenant dépeint ici porte le manteau à boutonnage simple de 1839 avec la nouvelle épaulette bien reconnaissable et un képi de toile de laine bleu foncé. **C2** Le Dragon monté représente un Caporal de l'époque de la Guerre du Mexique. Il a abaissé le pan arrière de son képi pour protéger son cou et porte un serre-tête adopté officieusement en laine peignée jaune. **C3** Ce musicien de l'orchestre des Premiers Dragons porte un manteau bleu ciel àdouble boutonnage spécifié pour temps froid ou inclément. Il était porté par tous les Dragons lorsque les éléments exigeaient son port.

D1 Durant les mois d'été il était possible de porter un pantalon blanc, illustré ici avec le manteau à double boutonnage autorisé pour le service et les campagnes en 1847. **D2** Ce Colonel des Dragons est représenté en uniforme complet avec un chapeau remplaçant son shako. **D3** Ce simple soldat du Régiment des Fusiliers Montés a reçu le même uniforme que son collègue des régiments de Dragons, à l'exception du pantalon bleu foncé. Il porte le fusil 'Mississippi' et a adopté des accoutrements de l'infanterie.

E1 Les officiers du Régiment de l'Infanterie Montée portaient le même uniforme que leurs camarades des Dragons, à l'exception d'un pantalon bleu foncé et d'une ceinture écarlate au lieu d'être orange. **E2** Des problèmes d'alimentation en Californie nécessitèrent l'utilisation de vêtements non réglementaires comme des pull-overs et chapeaux de paille de la US Navy. **E3** En 1851, un nouveau modèle de képi fut distribué. Ce simple soldat porte le mousquet de 1847 ainsi que le sabre de 1840.

F1 Cet officier porte l'uniforme de service adopté après 1851 avec épaulettes dorées, ceinture écarlate et pantalon bleu ciel. **F2** Les officiers de campagne des dragons avaient un manteau àdouble boutonnage avec sept boutons sur chaque rang. **F3** Le nouveau règlement de 1851 sur les uniformes introduisit un manteau bleu foncé à double boutonnage avec quatre brandebourgs noirs sur la poitrine et une 'pèlerine' détachable pour les officiers.

G1 Ce Quartermaster Sergeant porte le nouveau képi réglementaire avec un pompon vert et un manteau de laine bleu foncé avec revers et col verts. **G2** En 1851, des ordres généraux exigèrent un plastron orange qui identifiait facilement les musiciens et les clairons de compagnie des Dragons. **G3** Ce simple soldat des Seconds Dragons servant au Texas en 1853 porte le matériel de campagne.

H1 En 1854, le règlement demandait un retour au 'roundabout' ou gilet pare-balles avec passepoil orange comme finition. **H2** Ce sergent est dépeint dans la veste pare-balles réglementaire avec passepoil vert. **H3** Le simple soldat représenté ici porte un uniforme de service et le chapeau de cavalerie spécifié en 1855.

Farbtafen

A1 Diese Abbildung zeugt vom irregulären Wesen der Grenzbewohner, aus denen sich das "Mounted Ranger Battalion" zusammensetzte. Diese Figur trägt Hosen aus Hirschleder, die Kleider sind aus selbstgewebtem Tuch und zu der praktischen Ausrüstung gehören ein Pulverhorn, eine Kugelbeutel, ein großes Gürtelmesser sowie ein Steinschloßgewehr. **A2** Dieses Bild zeigt die Sommeruniform, wobei bei diesem rangniedrigen Offizier weiße Leinenhosen und eine kurze Jacke mit neun Knöpfen an die Stelle der Winterausstattung aus Wolle getreten sind. Außerdem trägt er die orangefarbene Seidenschärpe der Offiziere, das Lederkäppi des 1832er Modells und den Säbel der Dragoner-Offiziere, Modell 1833. **A3** Dieser Gefreite trägt die Winterfelduniform, die aus einer einfarbigen, dunkelblauen Wolljacke, hellblauen Wollhosen und einem schwarzen Lederkäppi des 1832er Modells besteht. Sein weißer Gürtel und die Querriemen halten den vorschriftsmäßigen Säbel und den Hall-Karabiner.

B1 Die Paradeuniform dieses rangniedrigen Offiziers setzt sich aus einem zweireihigen, enganliegenden, kurzen Waffenrock aus dunkelblauem Wollstoff, Kragen mit Goldlitze, goldfarbenen Schulterklappen und hellblauen Wollhosen mit gelben Doppelstreifen aus Besatzstoff zusammen. **B2** Der Musiker der Dragoner, der hier abgebildet ist, trägt den enganliegenden Waffenrock Modell 1833-51, der für die Musiker des Regiments vorgeschrieben war. **B3** Dieser Hauptmann der Dragoner hat seine im Feldzug verschlissene, ausgegebene Uniform mit zivilen Kleidungsstücken - unter anderem einem Jagdhemd - ausgetauscht. Außerdem hat er sich Zubehör der Infanterie zugelegt und hat ein Colt-Trommelgewehr bei sich.

C1 Der hier abgebildete Oberleutnant trägt den einreihigen Gehrock Modell 1839 mit den neuen, charakteristischen Schulterklappen sowie eine Tuchmütze aus dunkelblauem Wollstoff. **C2** Der berittene Dragoner stellt einen Unteroffizier aus der Zeit des Mexikanischen Krieges dar. Er hat den hinteren Teil seiner Mütze heruntergeschlagen, um seinen Nacken zu schützen und trägt ein inoffiziell übernommenes Stirnband aus gelbem Kammgarn. **C3** Dieser Musiker der "First Dragoon Band" trägt einen zweireihigen, himmelblauen Mantel, wie er für kaltes beziehungsweise widriges Wetter vorgeschrieben war und den alle Dragoner trugen, wenn die Wetterlage dies erforderlich machte.

D1 Während der Sommermonate konnten weiße Hosen getragen werden, die hier mit dem zweireihigen Gehrock abgebildet sind, der für das Feld und Feldzüge 1847 genehmigt wurde. **D2** Dieser Oberst der Dragoner ist in voller Uniform abgebildet, wobei ein Hut seine Mütze beziehungsweise den Tschako ersetzt. **D3** Diesem Gefreiten des Regiments berittener Schützen wurde dieselbe Uniform ausgegeben wie seinem Gegenpart in den Dragoner-Regimentern mit Ausnahme der dunkelblauen Hosen. Er hat das sogenannte "Mississippi"-Gewehr bei sich und hat sich einiges Zubehör der Infanterie angeeignet.

E1 Offiziere des Regiments der berittenen Infanterie trugen die gleiche Uniform wie ihre Kameraden bei den Dragonern mit Ausnahme der dunkelblauen Hosen, und ihre Schärpe war purpurrot anstatt orangefarben. **E2** Aufgrund von Schwierigkeiten bei der Versorgung in Kalifornien wurde der Einsatz von zusätzlicher, nicht vorschriftsmäßiger Bekleidung notwendig, wie etwa Pullover der US Navy und Strohhüte. **E3** 1851 wurde ein neues Mützenmodell herausgegeben. Dieser Gefreite trägt die 1847er Muskete sowie den 1840er Säbel bei sich.

F1 Dieser Offizier trägt die Paradeuniform, die nach 1851 übernommen wurde, und zwar mit goldenen Schulterklappen, einer purpurroten Schärpe und hellblauen Hosen. **F2** Dragoner-Offiziere der Felddienstgrade hatten zweireihige Mäntel mit sieben Knöpfen pro Reihe. **F3** Die neuen Uniformvorschriften aus dem Jahr 1851 führten einen zweireihigen, dunkelblauen Mantel ein, der vorne vier schwarze Posamentenverschlüsse hatte und bei den Offizieren einen abnehmbaren "Umhang" aufwies.

G1 Dieser Quartiermeister-Feldwebel trägt die neue vorschriftsmäßige Mütze mit einem grünen Pompon und den dunkelblauen Wollmantel mit grünen Manschetten und grünem Kragen. **G2** 1851 forderte die Kommandantur eine Brustplatte aus orangefarbenem Besatzmaterial, durch die Mitglieder der Kapelle und Kompanie-Hornisten der Dragoner leicht erkennbar sein sollten. **G3** Dieser Gefreite der "Second Dragoons" dient 1853 in Texas und trägt die Feldausrüstung.

H1 1854 kehrte man laut neuer Vorschriften zur kurzen Jacke beziehungsweise dem enganliegenden Waffenrock mit orangefarbenen Tressen zurück. **H2** Dieser Feldwebel ist in der ab 1854 vorschriftsmäßigen kurzen Jacke mit grünem Besatz abgebildet. **H3** Der abgebildete Gefreite trägt die Paradeuniform und den Kavalleriehut, der 1855 Vorschrift wurde.

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Avec annotations en français sur les planches en couleurs.
Mit Aufzeichnungen auf Deutsch über den Farbtafeln.

ISBN 1-85532-389-3
9 781855 323896